UNDER THE HARROW

rsity of California
thern Regional
brary Facility

ELLIS MEREDITH

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/underharrow00mereiala

Under the Harrow

Under the Harrow

By

Ellis Meredith

Author of "The Master Knot of Human Fate,"
"Heart of My Heart," Etc.

The toad beneath the harrow knows
Exactly where each tooth-point goes.
The butterfly upon the road
Preaches contentment to the toad.
Pagett, M.P.

Boston
Little, Brown, and Company
1907

Copyright, 1907,
By Little, Brown, and Company.

All rights reserved

Published, March, 1907

Printers
S. J. Parkhill & Co., Boston, U. S. A.

DEDICATED TO

THE HEAVENLY TWINS

AND ALL THOSE GOLDEN GIRLS AND LADS WHO CLIMB
THE HILL DIFFICULTY
TOWARDS MOUNT PARNASSUS

2229004

UNDER THE HARROW

I

THE rain was falling steadily, insistently, and the winter night was cold and cheerless. Lorraine Townsend plodded on down Broadway, the water sopping through her worn shoes at every step, while her wet skirts were blown and wrapped about her by the wind which threatened to tear her umbrella from her numbed fingers. The many lights were a blur in the rain and the shops looked inhospitable. She turned west at Twenty-third Street, and sighed as she looked at the long, interminable blocks, and took a fresh hold upon her refractory umbrella. Presently, turning in at a small grocery, she bought the supper supplies for herself and the two girls who were waiting for her in the fourth floor back, a block or so beyond. She wondered whether

they had had anything to eat that day. They had finished the crackers the night before and the tea that morning. She was conscious of a feeling of weakness which had superseded that of hunger to which she had grown accustomed during the past few months, and she dreaded the cold, dark room and the wan faces of her companions. But there was enough change left to buy some coal, and then had she not glorious news? Poor they unquestionably were, but before them were glowing possibilities. She hesitated a little, for Hope was sarcastic and Bess matter of fact, and what had seemed an amusing adventure might not appeal to them in the same way. Lorraine held her parcels tightly and tried to hurry. One more turn, and she found herself stumbling up the dimly lit stairway, conscious of an excited colloquy going on overhead. As she reached the last turn she saw the attenuated form of their landlady and heard her high, strident voice.

"I don't want to be unreasonable, and you ain't much behind, with this leastways," she was saying, while she examined the bill in her hand, "but land sakes, what's the use of it

all? Every day of my life I useter say to Mr. Willis, 'Mr. Willis,' I says, 'what's the good of it all?' and up to the day he died he never made no answer, and I don't know as he would if he was to rise up now. Seems like a man would hardly lie down an' die if there was any use livin'. Here you be, a-tryin' to write books and paint picturs and sech-like, just as if there wasn't hundreds a-starvin' at it now. So long's you pay your rent 'tain't no affair of mine, but what air ye doin' it for? Some of ye has good homes, an' ye'd be a sight better off in 'em. New York ain't no place for young girls, and the better lookin' they air the worse it is. There ain't none of you to say homely enough to get out and make a livin' with any comfort."

Lorraine was used to Mrs. Willis. "Is this a new book of lamentations?" she asked cheerfully, as she gained the landing and was fallen upon by her waiting comrades in distress, who relieved her of her parcels and her dripping umbrella. She had expected to find gloom and a chilly stove, but the parlor cook had got over the sulks, the kettle was singing,

and the room was warm and light. Mrs. Willis took her departure regretfully, with a lingering look at the parcels Lorraine had brought, and the girl looked around with a feeling that she had been defrauded of her part of good fairy. "What has happened?" she asked, surprise and grievance mingling in her voice.

"It's 'many happy returns' and one of them wasn't so bad," said Hope gleefully. "Can you believe it? We have a check, just a little one, of course, but it did some good."

"Which did you sell?" asked Lorraine eagerly, "and what has come back?"

"I sold some nonsense verses with Bess' illustrations, or maybe it was the pictures that sold. Anyhow, I got eight dollars, and while that isn't much it was enough to 'soften the heart of the cow.' I wouldn't have given Mrs. Willis so much of it, but she was here when it came, explaining how really sensible young women do housework, which pays well and requires no previous training! and no outlay for clothes, so I had to convince her that literature is a paying profession. I promised

her an immediate settlement if she would let us have some coal, and then I went out and got the check cashed and bought a dollar's worth of stamps. I could put them in my purse where she couldn't see them, and I gave her the rest. There's nothing to eat, but it's warm anyhow."

Lorraine laughed. "Isn't that just like Hope?" she said, "a dollar's worth of stamps and a Mother Hubbard pantry. But there's plenty to eat, an' it please you. I've had just a bit of luck to-day too, and we are going to have supper, a real, hot supper."

"Tell us about the luck," said Hope.

"Not yet," answered Lorraine evasively. "Let's have something to eat, and tell me about the stories. Maybe you won't think much of my piece of news."

After the supper things were cleared away, the girls gathered about the stove and Lorraine asked, "Where are the rest of the returns? Which of mine came back?"

"I'm not sure," answered Hope; "but I think this is 'Eagle Eye,'" handing over a long envelope, "and this is about the weight of

'An Experiment in Politics'; that takes three stamps, doesn't it? and this looks like poetry."

Lorraine frowned. "Contemporaneous verse, my child. You will never be the real thing until you learn these distinctions. Call no man, or woman either, a poet until after death." She opened the envelopes. "Yes, here's poor old 'Eagle Eye'; he's nearly been the rounds. The other is 'Harriet's Household.' Now what do you think is the matter with them?"

Hope reflected a moment. "Do you remember the story of the girl who makes jam and wants to be a writer? She has written one story, which she can't sell, and everybody advises her differently. There's a pirate in it, and first she is told to take him out and send it to a religious magazine, and then when it comes back she puts him in again; and she keeps on taking him out and putting him back, until finally she rewrites the whole thing, and sells it on the strength of the pirate. Then she retires on her laurels and sells jam the rest of her days. It's not very clear in my mind, but I think if you could make the pirate *motif*

a trifle more couchant in 'Eagle Eye' and a wee mite more rampant in 'Harriet's Household' it would be an improvement. 'Eagle Eye' is too somber. There's no relief in the tragedy; can't you wash off some of the warpaint, or take off a feather or two — "

"It's impossible," groaned Lorraine. "The only thing you can take off in that story is scalps. Besides, I've told it the way it happened. Isn't there any publisher who cares for history?"

"That's nothing. People don't care how a thing happened. They want it to happen to suit them, and you know yourself you couldn't sleep after reading a story like that. Do try and tone it down."

"I know what Hope means," said Bess. "When Dick Heldar's 'Last Shot' doesn't please, he just puts the soldier in his Sunday clothes and gives him a clean shave and a bath and sells him for twice as much and says, 'If they want furniture polish, let them have furniture polish, so long as they pay for it.' They don't want real Indians and fresh warpaint. Give your hero a diploma from Car-

lisle and a tailor-made suit instead of a blanket. You can't foreshorten a picture as it is in life. Nobody would believe it."

Lorraine shook her head obstinately. "Possibly I can leave off some feathers," she said, "but it won't be true to life. As it is I didn't scalp my victim, and I toned down my nomenclature and called 'Hell Gate' another name, which is enough to bar me from membership among the Daughters of the Pioneers. When you have a pirate story I don't believe in decorating his long, low, rakish craft with pink and white pop-corn and Christmas-tree candles, and serving afternoon tea. If you're going to have a pirate at all, you have to have grog, extra rations of it, and in spite of my W. C. T. U. mother, when I go on freebooting expeditions I insist on Jamaica rum."

"That may all be true," said Hope doubtfully, "but this is the twelfth venture. He has only one more chance. There must be something wrong."

"Maybe it's the readers," sagely suggested Bess.

"Darling child!" murmured Lorraine grate-

fully. "No, there's something the matter, but I don't know what. I'll send him out West somewhere; maybe they'll take to him more kindly, but he's such a good Indian I thought he'd stand a better show East where folks have had a few hundred years to forget about Indians. Then if he comes back he'll have to go to the ash-barrel."

"What's the matter with the other one?" asked Bess.

"'Harriet'? I think Hope is right about her," Lorraine admitted. "That's another true story, and the end isn't dramatic enough. If I could bring in the bold buccaneer long enough to sing the 'Pirate's Serenade' and make off with the fair but reluctant Harriet, that would improve it." She looked over the typewritten pages and sighed. "That means rewriting at least two-thirds of it, and when I typewrite my stuff I never blame the editors for declining it. I don't know anything that will reduce a swollen cranium so quickly. Did you get anything back, Hope?"

"Oh, yes; you are not the only unsuccessful writer in New York. Here's 'Mrs. Field's

Good Name,' with a polite note asking me to send them something else like it, but different. Is that sarcasm, or does the editor mean to drive me to a home for the feeble-minded?"

"You might send him 'Sara Harding,' that's different but like," ventured Lorraine, looking at the clock.

"Mercy, it's after ten, and you haven't told us about your good luck yet," said Bess.

They had reached the hair-combing stage, and Lorraine retreated behind the thick masses of a chestnut mane that almost reached the floor. "You know I washed my hair yesterday," she said irrelevantly.

"Your efforts to put off the evil day are all in vain," laughed Hope. "What has washing your hair to do with this wonderful piece of news?"

"Lots," she answered briefly; "I've rented my hair."

The girls stared at her. Bess found her voice first. "You're not going to have it cut off!" she cried in horror-stricken tones.

Lorraine's courage had returned. "I said rented, not sold," she answered. "You know how dreadfully it blew this afternoon about

three? I never can do anything with my hair for a day or two after it is washed. It just sifts out the pins. I felt it coming down and made a wild clutch at it and took refuge in a tiny drug store kept by a tiny old man, up on Fortieth Street, and the whole pile of it un-uncoiled."

"And you looked just like 'The Lady of Shalott' in the old editions of Tennyson," said Hope.

"Perhaps, but it was a blessing, not a curse, that came upon me," responded Lorraine. "One can't be dignified under such circumstances as that. The nice little old man laughed and made some pretty speeches, and I bought some hairpins with my last pennies; and — to make a long story short — I am going to sit in his window, with my hair spread abroad, as an advertisement for a tonic he can make for a cent and sell for a dollar a bottle. It's an old prescription that my family has always used, and is really good. He's going to divide the profits evenly, and insisted on my taking a small advance. Hence the supper. His name is Peter Bright, and his customers,

most of them, call him 'Uncle Peter.' I once knew three old maid sisters," she went on, "who used to prepare for death every little while, so as to spare those who should be left when the sad day came. They had a lot of trouble to know what to do with their false hair, for they had all lived in the days of chignons and waterfalls, and they had waves and curls and switches and frizzes; so at last they bundled up the whole assortment and sold it to a hair-dealer. Now if one can rent her hair and keep it too, isn't that much better than using it merely to keep one's hat in place?"

"Lorraine, you certainly are a trump!" said Bess.

"Besides, it will work out two ways, as I figure it," went on Lorraine. "First, it will give us a much-needed revenue, for if I do say it as shouldn't, there's not a thin-haired woman in New York but would buy a tonic that will grow hair like that; and, second, it will give me a subject for a good, newsy article, — 'How it feels to be an Advertisement.' Come, let's go to bed. There's something to get up for to-morrow morning."

II

LORRAINE'S business adventure proved so successful that she prolonged it for several weeks longer than she at first intended. A real friendship sprang up between her and "Uncle Peter," who took heart of grace and cleaned up the shop under her direction, and indulged in a fresh coat of paint for his dingy sign. In turn she told him the story of their struggle, and her plan to write up her experience. He listened with pleased interest, and then said: "When you get it done, mail it to this address. Mary Deland is my niece, and she has an editorial position on this paper. I'll give you a note to enclose to her, and she will do the best she can for you. We don't see each other often, for we both work long hours, but we love each other dearly. She is almost my only relative. And drop in sometimes. I wish you were my niece too."

It was two weeks before Lorraine heard any news from her story. Then there came a note

asking her to call on Mrs. Deland. The revulsion of feeling, the hope that her work was not absolutely worthless, since it was not returned, brought Lorraine's nerves almost to the snapping point. Quite suddenly she realized all the strain of the past few weeks, and the blank misery if this hazard also proved a failure. The girls cheered her as best they could, and lent her whatever wearing apparel they possessed that would lend any touch to her costume. It is a sad commentary on human nature, but they had all learned that one is not more likely to obtain work because the need of it is obvious.

Fortunately she did not have to wait long, and as she was ushered into a small, well-appointed office she was welcomed by a very tall, beautiful woman who held out her hand and said with a charming smile: "I am very pleased to meet you, Miss Townsend; any one of Uncle Peter's friends is dear to me for his sake, but as a writer you are all the more welcome." Mrs. Deland knew something of human nature, and Lorraine's dumb and imploring face told her all Uncle Peter's letter

had omitted. "Sit down, and let us have a cup of tea," she said. "I always have tea about this hour, and I want to hear about Uncle Peter, and then we will talk about the story."

Lorraine told all about her meeting with Uncle Peter, and their subsequent partnership, with girlish enthusiasm. It was such a relief not to have to speak of herself right at first. When they had reached the second cup and Lorraine was quite herself again, Mrs. Deland said: "We like your stuff very much; the managing editor wanted me to see you and talk with you, — no, I don't mean about this story, for it is already being set up, but could you keep on? We want some daily human interest stories; say half to three-quarters of a column; never more than that."

Lorraine's tongue clove to the roof of her mouth for the space of a half-minute, then she said she thought she could; there was a little more discussion, and then she found herself in The Presence. She never remembered much of that interview. She had a hazy recollection of a tall, grizzled man, slight of form with keen

eyes and a voice so singularly cool that one instinctively looked for a thermometer to see if the temperature was not fall ng.

"Can you begin now, Miss Townsend?" he a ked. "Our special man has gone to the *Herald*, and we wish to replace him at once. You bring a lighter touch and a new point of view. That's the great thing in newspaper work, the fresh standpoint."

"What hour shall I report?" answered Lorraine.

"You might report to Mrs. Deland for a week or so at eight in the morning After that, when you have the idea, you will find it more convenient to keep a day ahead, and turn in your copy by ten," he answered, turning away from a look of such gratitude that even he, hardened newspaper man that he was, found himself remembering and smiling over it.

Lorraine took her car trying to realize that her career had begun, but found herself thinking less of her own amazing good fortune than of Mary Deland, gracious, wonderful Mary Deland, as different from all other women as if she belonged to a new type. It seemed to

Lorraine that while the ordinary New York countenance might be called the face militant, Mary Deland's was the face triumphant. The usual face is a fighting face; the grim mouth, the lines, the alert eyes, the repression, the mask that slips now and then; most of us, for few are non-combatants, show the signals of war in our faces. The flag droops at half-mast, it is shot to ribbons, it is trailed in the dust, it is hauled down, it is reversed; sometimes it is the black flag, sometimes the white; sometimes it is the warning yellow of the plague and sometimes the fluttering red of the auctioneer. Lorraine felt that she knew the fighting face in all its moods, but this woman was different. Her white forehead seemed the fitting symbol of the lofty soul that dwelt within, her sweet lips and grave eyes were full of the serenity of overcoming. Thinking of her, Lorraine was carried far past the corner where she should have left her car.

III

ONE story does not make an author, nor provide an income, save in rare instances, nor one small salary insure the turning of a wintry discontent into glorious summer. Though the girls contrived to live upon Lorraine's wages, while they sought employment on their own account, they both rebelled.

"We can't go on this way, living on Lorraine," said Hope one gloomy afternoon turning away from her typewriter and gathering up her manuscript. "It's outrageous. She could get along fairly well on what she makes, but this thing of taking care of two able-bodied women is too much."

"I know," said Bess dismally, looking up from the table that was strewn with her cardboard, and poising her pen in mid-air to the imminent danger of her last sketch. "I suppose I ought to go home, as Mrs. Willis says. Did you hear her this morning? Anybody would think we were Barnum's ten-thousand-

dollar beauties to listen to her go on about the temptations and pitfalls which this city provides for the good looking. She spent at least fifteen minutes assuring me that the one thing she and the late lamented ever agreed upon was that this show was not worth the price of admission, and that all its three rings wouldn't furnish sawdust enough to stuff one doll, and after it was stuffed it would be nothing but sawdust.— Oh, is that you, Lorraine?'"

"Yes, and I'm glad I arrived in time to hear that disquisition on sawdust. If there is a class of people on earth for whom I have no use, it's the crowd who mourn when they find their dolls stuffed with sawdust. While my doll has anything in it I shall not complain. It is only when she hangs, limp and flat, with nothing to pin her clothes to and dangling china limbs, that you are going to hear the outcry of my anguished soul. What do you expect in a forty-nine-cent doll?'"

"Marked down from two eighty-four," added Hope.

"And dear at any price," said a voice from the doorway.

The girls turned in the dull twilight, and Lorraine flung open the door. Their unexpected guest was a little old lady, with near-sighted eyes, peering through thick-lensed glasses. She was dressed in the hodden gray of the Quaker, and a black and tan dog was at her heels.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "I rapped twice, but you did not hear me, and the door was ajar, and I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. My name is Brent, and I'm the oldest of the Heavenly Twins. My sister Eliza is only sixty, and there's just as much sawdust in our dolls as there ever was."

Her manner was so quaint and her accent so cheery that the girls drew toward her as if she were more promising than the sullen stove. "Perhaps," said Lorraine, politely offering her a chair, "you can tell these tiresome children how to keep the sawdust in their dolls."

"Or how to keep one's sawdust and eat it too," said Bess. "That's the rub, and one does grow hungry now and then. Can you tell us anything about a sawdust diet?"

"Certainly," said Miss Brent. "Dear, dear, but it is shameful the way the classics are neglected. Have you never heard of the

'Old person of Crewd,
Who said, We use sawdust for food;
It is cheap by the ton,
And it nourishes one,
And that's the main object of food'?"

"I wonder where one could find the nearest carpenter shop," said Lorraine reflectively. "Miss Brent, you behold before you three persons of undoubted genius. One of us has written a book which has been called a classic; as nobody reads it, when it gets old enough it may get into that category. We know we are geniuses because we seldom have enough to eat, while mere mediocrity goes forth and orders steak and onions. We live in a garret, never have any new clothes and, much to our regret, we are devoted to art for art's sake; at least we can't get anything else for it."

"That sounds like a true bill," said Miss Brent. "What do you do?"

"We do various things. Hope would have liked to tread the histrionic boards, but owing

to her entire lack of vanity I can't persuade her to try, and so she 'ekes out a miserable existence'— that's the right expression, isn't it? — as a producer of 'literacheur,' which is also my avocation. We have done some things of great brilliance. The reason it is so dark is that yesterday Hope found some stamps and sent off all our efforts. Usually our apartment looks like the grotto in a pantomime, lit solely by the effulgence of our unpublished works. We mean to keep a few on hand to save kerosene, but Hope is so extravagant."

"Never mind," said Bess, "some of them will be back soon."

"The infant prodigy who has just spoken," continued Lorraine, "hankers to 'paint on a ten-league canvas with brushes of camel's hair,' but so far her chromos usually come back, save when they are sent with some soul-thrilling tale of Hope's, and sold on the strength of the story."

"Which do you have the best returns from?" asked Miss Brent curiously.

"The quickest? I think *Harper's* is about as reliable as any of them. The *Century* is

prompt. Sometimes they come back from *McClure's* in two weeks, and I've had them back from the *Cosmopolitan* in ten days. The *Atlantic* takes a little longer, but they let you down with a personal letter that encourages you to send something else. The rest average along from two weeks to a month. We are small prophets, but we get reasonably quick returns."

"I don't think so," said Hope with a dissatisfied air. "It takes over a year for a story to reach the ash-barrel. Publishers have no right to waste so much time. Why can't they return things sooner? At this rate my ash-barrel will not be half full when I make my great hit."

"I have a friend in California who says all the big magazines keep agents at the Mississippi River to meet his manuscript and turn it back; but you'll have to explain about the ash-barrel. I thought writers wanted publishers to keep things," said Miss Brent.

"That's quite the old-fashioned idea," said Hope. "Now the way is to get an ash-barrel full of stories against the day of success. Don't

you recall that delicious fable in *Life* of the successful author and his ash-barrel? It tells how the critic goes forth to see what is the matter with literature, and he finds a plump old gentleman sitting on a pile of laurels selling stuff marked D. W. T. — declined with thanks — out of a barrel he filled before he grew famous. After one gets the laurels he can sell anything, but it is against the rules of the Amalgamated Order of Authors to put anything into the ash-barrel until it has been sent to thirteen places. Any one doing so is likely to lose his working card and be fined by the union."

"But why thirteen?" asked Miss Brent. "I thought thirteen was an unlucky number."

"Well, don't you think it's pretty unlucky to have a story come back thirteen times?" asked Lorraine.

"Oh, yes, of course!" answered Miss Brent, "it looks that way, but then that's another sign of genius. 'Vanity Fair' was rejected by twenty publishers, and Thackeray brought it out himself. 'Sartor Resartus' went the rounds. 'Tom Jones' failed until is was dramatized. At least a dozen publishers refused 'Uncle

Tom's Cabin.' 'Innocents Abroad' was declined by all the standard publishers and brought out as a subscription book. It took two years to sell 'Ben Hur,' and 'Lorna Doone' made its success after it had been out a dozen years. Miss Corelli's 'Romance of Two Worlds' was refused by all of Bentley's readers, including Hall Caine."

"I call that poetic justice," laughed Lorraine. "Do you remember how Carolyn Wells brackets the two of them?

'To the masses should our classes offer Ibsen when we find
Mr. Caine and Miss Corelli better please the massy mind?'

But you must be following the literary trail yourself or you wouldn't have so many of these consoling facts in mind."

Miss Brent blushed a charming pink. "Yes," she said bravely, "that is, I'm not, but I'd like to be. That's how I come to be here. An old gentleman, that I'm in the habit of pestering, tells me that what my work needs is editing, and he suggested that if Miss Townsend would undertake this for me that I have some things that might do. I shall not mind how dis-

couraging you are," she went on valiantly, turning to Lorraine. "Do you remember how Thackeray asked Jerrold if it was true that he had said 'The Virginians' was the worst book he had ever written, and Jerrold answered, 'No, I said it was the worst book anybody ever wrote'? And then there was the lunatic — I beg your pardon, my dear, no offence to you — who called 'The Wreck of the Grosvenor' 'a catalogue of ship's furniture,' and the reviewer who said Byron could never be a poet. You can call my scribbling anything you like; so far no one has been willing to call it at all except Peter Bright, and he only reads it because we used to go to school together. Can I bring the articles to-morrow? Will you really be so good as to go over them for me, for a consideration, of course?"

Lorraine hesitated. "I don't know that I can be of any use to you," she said honestly. "I have done a good deal of reviewing, but I haven't done much editorial work, and don't feel that my opinion is worth much."

"I'll be satisfied," said Miss Brent. "I'd like to come anyhow. I'm fond of geniuses."

She shook hands all round, and Lorraine saw her down the dark stairway. A carriage was waiting in the narrow street, to the great interest of the neighbors. It seemed darker and colder after she had gone. The girls held the lamp at the top of the stairs and waited Lorraine's return.

"What do you think she is?" asked Hope. "I believe she is a district visitor from a college settlement, looking for a chance to improve our minds and ask us to hear some good music."

"Maybe she's a city missionary," said Bess doubtfully.

"She might be the committee-woman for this ward," said Lorraine, who hailed from Denver, "but she isn't. She is our fairy godmother. I have just tucked her into a large pumpkin drawn by four fat white rats and she has vanished. You just wait and see. Things are going to be better for us and that right early. There was no condescension about her, or any effort to lend us aid and comfort and the price of a meal."

"And it was Uncle Peter who sent her!" added Bess, as if this alone constituted a guarantee of good faith.

IV

IN April there came an upheaval in the office where Lorraine was employed, and the new city editor promptly discontinued her daily story. "Come around in a week or so," he said gruffly; "there may be something then, but not now."

Lorraine turned to leave the office, sick at heart and utterly discouraged, and meeting Mary Deland in the elevator they went out together. For a long time they walked in silence, then turned in at Trinity Churchyard.

"It's hard," Mary said at last. "It's dreadfully hard for a woman to do newspaper work, if she is a real woman and feels it with her heart. You've done well, Lorraine. It has been really good work, with the elixir of life in it, the one drop of human blood that makes it vital; but Maxwell has a man he wants to put on, and he has to show his authority some way. He has let Hunter out, and Hunter is the best political man we ever had; and Stan-

ley, who knows more about music than any critic we are likely to get. How he had the heart to discontinue your little story I don't know."

"City editors are not much afflicted with enlargement of the heart," said Lorraine gloomily. She was thinking of the attic and the parlor cook and the girls, the girls, the attic and the parlor cook, and the thought was bitter.

"Some of them are kindness itself," answered Mary. "The first city editor I ever worked for was so patient and painstaking and so considerate in the assignments he gave me that I was spoiled for all the others. But, as you say, Maxwell has no heart. The boys in the office say he has no stomach even."

"What!" cried Lorraine in amazement.

"Yes, they say he doesn't eat; he stokes; he gets up steam in the boiler, and instead of the usual heart, lungs, *et cetera*, he has works which he winds up every week or so. He is a good machine, but woe to any one who gets caught among the cogs. I can't stay here any longer, Lorraine; there are other reasons, and I am

going West. I have a good offer and shall leave at once. Can't you go with me? It is always an advantage to have worked in New York, and I think I might be able to help you find an opening. We will take a few rooms together, and perhaps we can find time for something beside the 'demnition grind.' I have a novel I want to finish. Will you come, Lorraine? There's no one else in the world that I'd care to have, but I want you."

Lorraine looked up at the taller woman, her guide and inspiration, and her eyes filled. She longed to go, but she thought of Hope, working away so faithfully; of Bess, whose drawings had been accepted several times of late. Without her they could not stay. The brimming eyes brimmed over and the two women stole into the quiet, dark church, and Lorraine had her cry out on Mary's shoulder.

"Some day you will come," she said, "and we will work together, and until then, if I don't write often, don't think it is because I don't care." She held up her shaking right hand, an eloquent if silent tribute to her industry. "They say it will be worse as time goes on,

but every Sunday there will be something in my stuff that will be for you, and you must try and take that as a weekly letter, just as I shall look for your stories, and feel that I am hearing from you."

"I shall write to you whether you answer or not, Mary Deland, and I shall read every line of yours," said Lorraine; "and when the girls don't need me any more I shall come to you. I shall never forget what you have been to me, what you have done for me. How can you understand everything so perfectly? How can I ever learn that?"

Mary Deland's face saddened. "I hope you may never learn by experience," she said. "I hope you will never purchase knowledge at so high a price as I, for it has been dearly bought and paid for in my heart's blood. Some day I will tell you. Promise me, Lorraine, that every day you will write something, even if it is only twenty lines, into which you put the best there is in you, for some day you are going to do something worth while. I know this and look forward to the time when I shall be very proud of you."

They kissed each other good-by there in the somber church and separated at the gate, one to pack trunks and buy tickets, the other to face Mrs. Willis and the anxious faces of her comrades

V

"WE might as well face the cold facts, Lorraine," said Hope, "and they are cold, chronically, clammily cold, like this stove," giving the coals a vicious poke. "You go with Mary Deland and I'll go back to the farm and teach school, or marry William Smith or some other rural hero. I can't produce literature, or if I can I can't sell it. I used to say if all else failed I would start a waffle factory, for I can make better waffles than anybody, but I haven't the courage. If I tried it all the hens in the country would strike, eggs would soar without waiting to hatch wings, and I verily believe sour milk would turn sweet, because I can't cook with baking powder."

"But the mortgage?" asked Lorraine; "and — it isn't exactly pleasant at home, is it?"

"No," drearily. "A mortgage is like Nixon Waterman's grass. 'I see it growing day by day, it also grows by night,' and the interest eats one out of house and home, but at this

rate I shall never be able to help lift it. All I've done by coming here is to relieve them of the burden of my existence, and you've borne that a good part of the time, which isn't fair. The rent is due for another month and we haven't anything ahead to speak of, and you know Mrs. Willis."

"Stand her off for a few days," answered Lorraine. "Tell her that 'rent is robbery.' That will give her something to think about and us a little more time."

"I've had time enough," answered Hope. "After more than a year I haven't made good, and I have no right to keep you here when you can do so much better. If Bess can hang on a little longer I am sure she will succeed, but I can't see anything ahead for myself. I can write some things fairly well, but it is work for me; I don't love it as you do. I have the dramatic instinct, I can see a situation, and if I could say it I could make it sound real, but it slips away before I can write the words. I'd starve to death at it. Who's that?"

There was a brisk rat-a-tat at the door and Miss Brent came in, Rab at her heels. "Don't

think me a professional eavesdropper," she said, "but who is starving?"

"We haven't begun yet, at least not enough to hurt," answered Lorraine; "but Hope is sure she has sighted it right off our port quarter in the fog. I'm delighted. It's a sure sign of genius."

Miss Brent shook her head. "Don't you ever believe such trash as that. Geniuses don't starve because they are geniuses; they are geniuses because they starve. It isn't necessary to know any more about literature than I do to see that it is suffering from fatty degeneration."

"Don't try to reconcile us to our poverty, Miss Brent," said Hope, laughing a trifle bitterly. "If we hanker after the flesh-pots of Egypt it's only 'them spicy garlic smells' we're thinking of, and our idea of riotous living is to put cream on our porridge."

Lorraine adjusted a piece of paper over a broken window pane and tried to stir the fire to some sign of life, and Miss Brent sat in silent communion with herself for several minutes. "Girls," she said finally, "you are every one

of you the owner of God-given genius, and genius ought always to live in the attic and keep its clothes in pawn, like Goldsmith or Balzac. If it lives well for three days a month, like Henri Mürger, it should starve the other twenty-seven, as he did, or be without a sou, as Gérard de Nerval usually was. I don't like to interfere with the ways of Providence or lay a straw in your pathway, but the truth is, our attic is full of geniuses now, and there's nothing left but the basement. There is a kitchen and a big dining-room with a closet and a pantry. The furnace is on that floor, so it is always warm, and if you could cook and eat in the kitchen, and fix your cots in the other room, you might be very comfortable. We don't use that part of the house any more, and you would be more than welcome if you cared to come; do you think you would like it? Please don't be offended at the offer."

A question like that is too palpably absurd for an answer. The two older girls precipitated themselves upon Miss Brent, while Bess contented herself with nearly hugging the life out of Rab. There being nothing to wait for and

no vast amount of household goods to move, the transfer was made that very day, while Mrs. Willis predicted dire disaster, and the Heavenly Twins hovered over their new *protégées* like two benevolent bantam hens, clucking encouragement and good will.

VI

THE girls had been installed in the Brent basement for several days before they received a visit from the elder of the Heavenly Twins.

"We didn't want you to think we should be running in every hour in the day just because we want to," she explained; "but Elise does make such good cookies I just had to bring you some." She put a heaped-up plate upon the table and the girls fell to. Fortune had not yet smiled upon them, but, even if she had, cookies by a pound-cake recipe, and still smoking hot from the oven, are fit food for Fortune herself.

"Whichever of you writes a book first, *mes enfants*," said Miss Brent, "if it has anything about geniuses in it, is hereby notified that I want to write one chapter. Nobody need read it, and you can label it To Be Skipped, but I want to write just one chapter."

"You shall," cried Hope and Lorraine in a chorus. "And I'll illustrate it, if it is the only picture in the book," added Bess; "but what is it to be about?"

"The advantages of hunger," answered the old lady. "No, but seriously, I mean it; and while you might not think it, I know something about it myself. When Elise and I went to Paris the first time we exhausted our allowance long before the next remittance was due. We did not know any one there, we were not very wealthy, and we found ourselves confronted with the problem of living three weeks on ten francs. First we went without our breakfasts. That is quite a fad now, but it was unheard of then. However, the Continental breakfast isn't much to go without when you've been accustomed to Pennsylvania Dutch cooking, ham and eggs, fried potatoes, cracked wheat, 'panhaus' and buckwheat cakes *pour dejeuner*. Then we took to eating bread and nuts and apples in our room. How we did want some American cooking, but we stretched out the ten francs, and at the end of our three weeks were wiser and healthier! And then, what do you think we

did after all that experience? When our money came we went straight to the best restaurant we knew and ate so much we were stupid for two days. I've always felt certain that if we had kept on short rations two weeks longer Elise would have had her pictures on the line and I might have achieved a place on the staff of *Figaro*."

"Let me see, how long is it since we had a wild orgy?" mused Hope. "Last May, wasn't it, Lorraine, when you sold your 'Coöperative Mortgage,' and Bess, her 'Boy Fishing,' on the same day? I wanted to make them an eel pie, Miss Brent. You know Sterne said he liked nothing else so well, because you get so much for your money. But they insisted on a tea-bone, such a wasteful steak, and apple pie. Now do you think geniuses ought to eat pie?"

"Certainly not," laughed Miss Brent, "though Goldsmith said rebellion would be impossible if there were veal pie and whisky in every man's house. Raphael and Correggio are my favorites; they were vegetarians; and Murillo said a man couldn't live on coarse food and have the soul of an artist. But then, on the other

hand, Schubert was given to consuming quantities of corned beef and cabbage. Fancy writing that Serenade after a boiled dinner; and Beethoven was addicted to pumpernickel and *wienerwurst*. But all this is preliminary. I didn't mean to write the chapter now, or turn it into a sermon, but Elise sent me down with a discourse divided *à la* all Gaul; first to present the cookies, second to say you are welcome to the use of a cook-book compiled as a result of that ten-franc experience, and third to ask you to 'come to the festal board to-night, for bright-eyed beauty will be there.' This does not refer to Elise or me, but to our Blessed Boys who are coming down to have coffee with us and spend the evening. Now, having done my best to take your appetites away, I hope you will forgive me and be as hungry as possible. Come a few minutes before six."

"Didn't I say she was a fairy godmother?" said Lorraine triumphantly, as the old lady's quick steps died away upon the stair.

"And now that she has conjured up several princes there can be no doubt about it," concluded Bess.

VII

THE evening was a most enjoyable one, as they say in the society columns. Promptly at seven o'clock the young men from the attic arrived; there were three of them, Theodore Erskine, as yet a briefless barrister; Louis Lassalle, who had drifted from story to play writing; and Paul Garreck, who played second violin in one of the minor theaters. The fourth attic genius, Karl Prince, generally called Prince Karl, was to come later. He was a student at Columbia, and had a lecture on for the first of the evening.

After a little music the conversation drifted naturally to the struggles of the artist, and when the girls told of their difficulties in placing stories, Louis said quickly, "If you think it is hard to sell a story, you ought to try a play. There's no comparison."

"I don't see how it can be much worse," said Lorraine, "except that it takes more stamps."

"Oh, I do!" Hope interrupted. "Doesn't every leading lady want part of it rewritten, and the *dénouement* changed? Doesn't the soubrette object to her song, and the old man insist on a touch of pathos?"

"Yes," answered Louis, turning to her appreciatively, "and the leading man doesn't think the strong scene suited to him, and the villain wants to know why you haven't had him say, 'Ha! I have it!' and the man who has been hind legs in the dancing heifer of the last pantomime is hurt if he is asked to say, 'My lord, the carriage waits;' and the managers! they tell you their sole aim in life is to encourage talent, but —. I caught one of them on the stage one afternoon just after rehearsal and gave him my scenario. He was very favorably impressed, and then some one trotted R. of C. and it was all U. P. with me simply because he had an umbrella."

They all looked at him interrogatively, and he went on: "Oh, it's unlucky! Another time I had a curtain raiser that just suited a certain leading lady; her manager said he knew she would take it, and sent me to her. Just as

soon as she saw the manuscript she nearly fainted. It was written on manila paper, and yellow is supposed to be a hoodoo to theatrical people."

"Tell us some more," said Hope breathlessly. "I love stage gossip."

The young fellow colored warmly. "It would be pleasanter telling if it wasn't so monotonous. I've been amused sometimes at the way these actors love one another. I had an appointment with one of them whose name is pretty well known, and incidentally mentioned another of the fraternity to whom I had submitted a play. 'Yes,' she said sweetly, 'Violet is a dear girl; I'm awfully fond of Violet, — but isn't she getting just too fat for anything?' Later on, when I saw Violet, I couldn't resist the temptation to get her opinion of the other lady, so I spoke of her work, whereupon the second lady said, 'Oh, Mary is such a clever woman! Don't you think her Mrs. Alving wonderful? But isn't she a back-yard fence for looks!'"

"Did either of them take your play?" asked Hope.

"No. I thought Violet was going to, and I had an appointment with her manager and her leading man to meet us after rehearsal. As they were going over the play a cat jumped on the stage, and nothing could budge the lady after that."

"'A harmless, necessary cat,'" quoted Hope.

The young fellow named Theodore, but called Ted, laughed heartlessly and hummed still more heartlessly, "'Oh, I thought he was a goner, but the cat came back!' Was he like the poor cat i' the adage, according to Mark Twain's version, 'sicklied o'er with care'? Is the poor creature dead now?"

Louis joined in the laughter. "I don't want to bring down seven more years of bad luck," he said. "No, the cat went on his way rejoicing, but when Violet got stranded I felt it was a judgment on her. The cat was a warning not to reject my play."

"Literature is bad enough, as I know to my sorrow," ventured Ted, "but the professions are worse. There is a young doctor across the hall from me, and we have frequently discussed the singular freedom from sickness and liti-

gation enjoyed by the people of Manhattan. We have a wager as to which of us will succumb first, and the one who makes the first fee is to give a dinner, if the fee is large enough to pay for it. It is awful when one thinks of the number of young people who are graduated annually and turned out to starve. We have decided that starvation should be set down among the so-called natural deaths for professional people."

"Yes," said Lorraine; "while the stamps hold out to burn, the manuscript may not return. At least we can go after the editor and make the welkin ring with the tramp of the postman bringing back the unavailable."

"I saw a good thing and cut it out the other day," laughed Ted. "It is from *Frank Leslie's*, telling how they submitted their prospectus to 'A proud and Independent Author,' who rejected the same without even one word of encouragement, but only the following (typewritten) slip:

> "'I regret that the enclosed is not just suitable for my purpose. It is accordingly returned to you with the thanks of
>
> THE AUTHOR.

"'While Authors cannot hold themselves responsible for magazine advertisements received by them, they will endeavor to return those they do not find interesting, if stamped and addressed envelopes are enclosed for that purpose.'

"The article goes on to say:

"'We will not go so far as to say that the authors are joined together in a conspiracy to keep certain magazines from getting their names before the public, though sometimes we have reason to suspect that such is the case; but we do claim that authors as a rule are biased and narrow and arbitrary in their judgment of magazines, and we have about given up hope of receiving justice or strictly impartial treatment at their hands.'

"Now isn't that richness?"

In the general laughter Miss Brent turned to Lorraine. "My dear, what was that stuff you read me about the 'How to' articles in the magazines?"

"Oh, don't!" objected Lorraine; "it was such a personal thing, Miss Brent. I don't mean I wrote it, but I think it would hit us all. Is there any one here who has never read a letter beginning, 'We regret to be obliged to return —'?"

Miss Elise broke the stony silence. "I never did," she said; "but as I never could remember to enclose stamps, my manuscripts never came back."

"That's a new way to prevent the return of one's yarns," said Ted, "but let's have the poem by all means;" and, amidst laughter and applause, Lorraine recited the following gem, long since pasted in the scrap-book of every aspiring genius in the literary field:

"Now's the time the bookstore windows show a most engaging lot
Of the 'How to' books and essays telling How and How to Not —
How to know the purple Pansy when you meet it in the Wood;
How to tell the Poison Toadstool, when it Is or Isn't Good;
How to recognize a Sparrow, Fighting in the Garden dirt;
How to Pick out Proper Patterns for a Woodland Walking Skirt;
How to feed the shining Goldfish; How to know the Cuckoo's call;
How to deal with Mr. Burglar when you meet Him in the Hall;
How to play at Table Tennis; How to Ping and How to Pong;
How to do artistic Fretwork; How to Write a Funny Song;

How to bet on Running Horses, so you'll surely, surely Win;
How to walk Home in the evening after Losing all your Tin;
How to Win a timid Maiden, with a Soft Persuasive Coo;
How to make her think she's got to Leave her Happy Home for you —
Though I've searched the bookshop windows high and low, from morn till night,
I have never yet discovered How to sell the stuff I write!"

"Why doesn't somebody write it?" sighed Hope; while Ted, looking over the group, said reflectively: "There are enough of us to try Mark Twain's painter plot. Don't you recollect it? There are the usual young men studying art in Paris, with starvation staring them in the face, also as usual. They cannot help seeing how much it helps a genius to die, so they decide that the one who does the best work must be sacrificed. Don't be alarmed. They slay him for publication only and fill the papers with stories of his talent and his poverty until Millet and Bougereau are not to be mentioned in the same day. This enables them to sell his pictures for enough to provide them all with ease and comfort, and whenever they get a little hard up they 'discover' another of

his immortal canvases and sell it for a fabulous sum."

Lorraine shook her head. "I don't see how we could work that out in literature," she said. "Bess draws and paints too, but none of the rest of us do, and I don't think it would go with stories, but here is a plan of mine —"

Just then the front door opened. "It's Prince Karl," said Miss Elise; "bring him in, Teddy, before Lorraine tells her stratagem for beguiling the unwary publisher."

The young fellow who came in was younger than most of the others, barely twenty, and, without being in the least handsome, there was something so fine about his bearing and so noble in his face that one understood why it seemed natural to call him Prince Karl. After the introductions, Miss Brent explained, and Lorraine continued:

"I want to form an authors' conspiracy; let us agree on some plot that has enough merits so that we can each work it out in our own way. Bess can illustrate for all of us, and when the stories are done send them to the same editor. He might take one of them, and

in that way we would find out, by sending them to different editors as fast as they came back, the kind of story that is likely to be available."

"I'd like that," said the newcomer eagerly; "and I heard a story the other night that I think would give a fine subject. There was a man who was determined to commit suicide; he had come to the conclusion life wasn't worth living; he was the last of his family, in poor health and with not much money. Just as he was buying the poison a chance came for him to practically give up his life; never mind how, but it seems to me there might be a lot made out of that situation. He must give or be willing to give his life away. Would that do, Miss Lorraine?"

"Splendidly," she answered; but Bess shivered.

"I don't want to illustrate your stories!" she said.

"It is a bit gruesome," said Louis.

"Do you think so?" answered Lorraine. "Death doesn't seem any more tragic than life. Do you think it is, Miss Brent?"

The old lady readjusted her glasses. "I confess," she said slowly, "that death doesn't strike me as particularly cheerful. Maybe you could make it so in fiction. I've often wondered how we would go if we had our choice. What would you choose, Ted?"

"With the flag flying and the bugle call sounding," he answered without a moment's hesitation.

"And you, Paul?"

"Like Mirabeau, to the sound of exquisite music."

Louis shook his head. "I'm frankly a coward," he said. "I don't like even thinking of it. If I can't slip away in my sleep I'd rather go with some one I loved in some paralyzing disaster, flood or earthquake."

"Hope?"

"Oh, not that way," she said dreamily; "but on a May morning in the country, with the scent of the clover fields coming through the open window, and the song of the meadow lark and all the sense of the renewal of life."

Karl smiled. "Death ought to be a conflict," he said. "I don't believe in dying till one has

to, unless one dies for something. Then it wouldn't make much difference. I don't want to 'easy live and quiet die.' Guillotine or rifle shot, flood or flame, so one dies for a cause or to save some one else, — it's all the same to me."

Miss Brent turned to Bess, who held her hand and drew closer to her. "Like Louis," she whispered, "Mr. Lassalle, I mean, with some one I loved."

The old lady patted her shoulder. "Well, Lorraine, I begin to see infinite possibilities in your plan. How are you going to meet the grizzly monster, if you have a choice in the matter?" While she spoke lightly there was an undercurrent of feeling in her voice that did not escape Lorraine's sharp intuitions.

"Any way that is quick," she answered. "I am a coward about pain, but I don't dread death, and sometimes I rather like to look forward to it, just as I do to coming home, now we have a home to come to. It is the door to happiness and peace, where those we love are waiting for us; why should one dread it? You'll see before the stories are done."

There was a general agreement, and then the little party broke up, the Blessed Boys ascending to their eyrie and the God-given ones to their burrow, while the Heavenly Twins laid heavy wagers as to who would have the best story in the contest, and laughed again over the jests of the evening and then slept the sleep of the just.

VIII

TWO or three weeks later as Lorraine, who had been taken back on the paper, was hurrying home through the gathering darkness, she heard quick steps behind her that seemed familiar.

"Can I be a friend in need?" asked the boy called Prince Karl, taking her umbrella and substituting his more ample one. "It's a miserable night and we go the same way."

Lorraine gave up her packages with a sigh of relief, and Karl stowed them away in his capacious overcoat. Then she tucked her hand under his arm and they went on. "I seem to be the friend in need," she laughed. "I need everything, beginning with pockets. Have you done your euthanasia story yet?"

"I'm glad of a chance to talk to you about it," he said, "for it isn't turning out as I planned at all. I believe I have a story, but I can't seem to lay hold of it."

"That sounds as if it were alive," she said encouragingly. "A real story is apt to develop characteristics of its own, and go off on tangents the author never thought of when he began it. Can't you come down and read it to me?"

"I'm afraid of the others," he answered with boyish shyness.

"Bess is going to an art lecture with Ted. By the way, has he always been deeply interested in art? And Hope is going to rehearse something with Louis and Paul in Miss Brent's parlor, so we shall have the coast to ourselves. I'd like to have you read it to me; it makes me feel so vain and self-important!"

As they turned into the infinitesimal front yard, she said impulsively: "Come down and have supper with us. There's plenty, for I'm at work again and Hope has sold a serial and Bess has some illustrating. I'm writing up 'Men Who Carry Their Wards.' Coming from Denver I know a ward from a precinct and the relation of a caucus to a primary, which is a source of never-ending amusement to the city editor. Do come; the girls will be delighted."

They went into the basement hallway and turned in at the door of the room that served as a workshop and laid aside their wet things, and then Karl was ushered into the kitchen-dining-room combination. Bess was cracking the crisp baked potatoes as she heaped them on the platter; there was a jar of steaming baked apples, and Hope was beating the eggs for the omelet. It was a jolly supper, and when it was over Lorraine, who by virtue of her quarter of a century posed as a venerable person, despatched Bess to her lecture and Hope to her play, while she washed the dishes and Karl dried them. Already she had grown fond of the household; they were all dear and different — perhaps Prince Karl was the most different.

As he sat reading by the drop-light while Lorraine rested in the cozy corner, she watched his fine, clearly cut face, full of enthusiasm, with his whole soul in the story he was reading to her. As he went on, Lorraine put the pillows away and sat up very straight. When he finished and looked up for her verdict, she was leaning towards him with shining eyes. "You

mustn't try to make a short story of that," she said eagerly. "No wonder it rebels and refuses to be cut down to fit your Procrustean requirements. You must make a novel of it, and it will be a great one."

He looked at her incredulously. "A book, — why, I couldn't write a book," he said.

"But you can, you have, you are going to," she cried delightedly. "Out West before I came here to burn up the East River I used to do reviews, and even if I can't make literature myself I know it when I hear it, and that's a great story. There are plenty of ways to elaborate the suicide idea in a repellent or commonplace manner, but your hero comes out of the shadows and makes of death a shining mark, and his exit is splendid. There are situations that transcend mere tragedy." She paused as if ransacking her brain for an illustration, and he waited silently. Finally she went on: "Hugo wrote the greatest suicide stories that I know of; we don't think of them that way because they are so much beside, but his heroes generally take suicidal risks or deliberately commit suicide. You think I am

mistaken, don't you? In 'The Toilers of the Sea' the hero goes to the great chair-like rock and waits for the tide to cover him. In 'The Man who Laughs' Gwynplaine walks off the deck of the vessel into the sea. In 'Ninety-three' the old count returns to rescue the children from the tower when it means certain capture and death, and is released by his nephew who takes his place under the guillotine the next morning, while his friend who has voted for his execution shoots himself as the knife falls. And Javert—after his life has been saved by Jean Valjean, and he learns that the ex-galley-slave has rescued Marius at the barricades and carried him through the Great Sewer, —unable to fulfil his duty by arresting Jean Valjean, kills himself. Every one of these cases possesses the elements of the highest tragedy, but those in which the cause of the action is merely a personal equation do not compare with the others in grandeur. Gauvain is infinitely finer than his friend, Gavroche than Gwynplaine. Just as life 'persists,' as the doctors say, even when there is no health in us, so there is something in our nature that revolts against the idea

of dying for nothing. One may die for his country or for a belief or for another, and go down to his long rest justified. Hugo showed that he could be the heroic as well as write it when he published the book that sent him into exile, the old Roman alternative for death. The charge of the Light Brigade was magnificent, but it wasn't war; Leonidas and his three hundred achieved immortality without an interposing blunder. Thermopylæ was magnificent, but it was war too. There are no more splendid suicides in history than these, yet are they to be compared with the awful heroism of Father Damien going to Molakai to live and die with the lepers there? Courage like that makes the greatest soldier that ever lived a mere gladiator in comparison. Don't you see? Your story has this finer quality and plot and imagination —"

"But I haven't any style," he said, still unconvinced.

"Never mind about that," she answered. "Style, when you come to think of it, is like the top step that one misses in the dark because it isn't there. Doesn't it seem foolish to

read directions to read Addison or Stevenson or Ruskin to improve one's style? Read them for a lesson in the use of words, for artistic proportion, for pleasure, and then write your own story in your own way, and if you succeed in saying what you want to say, you have found the style you had to have for that particular story. But hurry, hurry! I do so want to know a successful author, and think of the fun we shall have reading the reviews!"

"I'm afraid even to think of them," he said. "Do the critics read the books they review?"

"Yes, generally. When you think of what is expected of most of them I wonder they are as lenient as they are. Very few of them are as gentle as Bryant; you know, when the book was impossible, or should have been, he used sometimes to say, 'but the cover is very pretty.' Just try reading a book a day and you'll have lots of sympathy for the critics. Besides, one doesn't have to read the whole of a story to know whether the author can write English, is ordinarily painstaking, and has a publisher who knows something of typographical beauty. Once I reviewed a story that was accounted

one of the season's successes, and yet, after describing the arrival of a carriage-load of people at a country inn during a pouring rain, with roads almost impassable with mud, his heroine trips lightly down the same road the next morning and meets the villain who, after staring her out of countenance, drives on 'enveloped in a cloud of dust.' A thing like that prejudices the reviewer."

"I should think it would," answered the boy, "but it doesn't seem as if any one could make such a mistake if he re-read the story."

"It doesn't follow. Homer nods sometimes, you know. Who was the Chicago girl who wrote the viking story a few years ago? It was gorgeously gotten up, and in the advance notices it was said the young lady had spent several years studying Norse customs, yet she draped her viking halls in black velvet. However, when Richard Hovey dressed his Round Table people in the same fabric, she might be forgiven."

"Was that wrong?" he asked. "I never thought anything about that sort of thing."

"Yes, because velvet wasn't made until a good many centuries later. According to critics one must be 'convincing' — what is it Van Dyke says about seeing the local color without being blind to the inner light? The local color should not be laid on with a trowel, so thick that the inner light can't shine through, and if it is one of the strong features of the story it should be correct. Otherwise it can't be convincing. The author who has a pleasure party drive to Cheyenne Mountain and over Marshal Pass the same afternoon may be a master of English, but he has something to learn of Colorado distances."

"I don't see how I can make my story convincing," he said, still doubtful. "The very heart of it is a legend, a myth, something that couldn't happen."

"That may be, but nevertheless you have made it real; you have made it seem as if it could happen. Now, Henry James could take the legend of Mary's little lamb and make it seem as if it couldn't happen. That's the other kind of genius. But go on with it while the spirit moves you. There's many a cake that

remains dough for the lack of turning at the right time!"

The boy thanked her, and, gathering up his manuscript, ascended to the attic to go to work with renewed vigor and a great burning of the midnight gas.

IX

"I'M glad we're well insured," said Miss Elise. "Emmy, this house fairly coruscates; genius to left of us, genius to right of us —"

"Geniuses in front of us volleyed and thundered," added Miss Brent, as the sound of a dramatic climax and the wild screech of a violin were drowned in a burst of laughter.

"I wonder if they'd mind an audience?" said Miss Elise. "Karl is trying his new story on Lorraine; Bess and Ted have gone somewhere; and I pine to do something wild and riotous and exciting. Let's go hear Louis' play."

"Maybe they won't want us," said Miss Emma.

"I'll ask them," said Miss Elise bravely; but there was no need, for Paul was already at the door, with his beloved violin tucked under his arm, requesting their attendance.

"We want an umpire," he said. "The manager and the star have reached a deadlock

over a piece of business; I agree with the star, but the manager says the orchestra has no business to have opinions, so we'd like to have you come and decide for us."

The audience, pleased and excited, took the box seats on the sofa, the orchestra struck up, and the little play progressed to its tragic conclusion, — for does not youth always love tragedy?

The plot was simple, — the old story of the lover who loves and rides away; they are both players; the deserted woman returns to their little garret home to find the sunshine gone, and a cold brief note that leaves no doubt of her fate. Five years later, the player has made a Parisian success — when in doubt of the entire morality of anything set it in Paris — and the forgotten woman reappears, asking for an engagement in his company. She meets the star. "Can you act?" he asks, "do you dance? Possibly you sing?" In her poverty and distress he fails to recognize the girl he has betrayed and left behind; spurred by the memory of her love and her sorrow, she answers by proposing a pantomime. Quickly she suggests her

stage setting, and then portrays the return of the young woman, as she comes singing into the room, and bends over the cradle, cooing to her little one. Then, still talking to the baby, she lays the cloth as if to prepare the supper, and going to the chiffonier finds the letter that tells her the end of all her hopes and dreams has come.

Up to this time the man has been an interested spectator; then memory asserts itself and conscience dashes the scales from his eyes. It was at this point that the author of the play and his leading lady hopelessly differed. There was a stage fall, and Louis insisted that the first thought of the young mother would be for her child, all she had left in the world, and that she should fall with her arms outstretched across the cradle, while the false lover starts toward her in conscience-stricken grief.

Hope scouted the idea. "It is too soon," she said. "She has forgotten the very existence of the child, everything in the world except the one great, overwhelming loss that has left the world a blank, striking her dumb and paralyzing her brain."

"But wouldn't she turn to her child? She is a mother as well as a wife," insisted Louis; "it seems to me the natural thing would be for her to cling to what she had left."

"No," said Hope stubbornly, "not a young woman, who loves with all the first fervor and passion of her nature; perhaps an older woman, with three or four children, might think of them first, for it would be a common grief and shame that they must share, but not a young girl to whom, even yet, the child is a kind of a marvel, dearer because of its father than of itself. Moreover, you must remember that this woman is playing her life; she is asking for her place in his heart, not for a place in his troupe. The appeal must be direct; nothing can come between. She ought actually to faint; that cannot be a part of her play, but the culmination of her soul's tragedy."

Still Louis remained half-unconvinced. "I don't believe a woman can forget her child," he said; "and wouldn't the child itself constitute the strongest claim she could make upon the man? Don't you think so, Miss Elise?"

"No," she said, shaking her head; "I believe Hope is right, but I can give you better authority than either of us. Don't you remember Tennyson's poem?

'Home they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry:
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep or she will die."'

She never thinks of the child until

'Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee —
Like summer tempest came her tears —
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."'"

"I surrender," said Louis; "I'm not only outnumbered, but outclassed. I don't know as much about women as Tennyson did, or about anything else, for that matter. Shall we go on?"

The players took their places again, the audience settled back on the sofa, and Paul took up the score, playing very softly the old tune of "The Mill-Wheel." One could almost hear the words:

"For she I love is faithless,
And broken is the ring."

The little scene of the finding of the letter was well played, and then, as if it took some time for her to grasp the dreadful truth, she stood, holding the letter, then fell slowly, inertly.

The sisters and the orchestra and the author applauded wildly, then the sisters looked at each other.

"Yes, it does remind me—" said Miss Emma, and stopped

"Of Mary Anderson's fall in 'A Winter's Tale,'" completed Miss Elise.

They had all adjourned to the study and were gathered about the fireplace. "Tell us about it," said Louis.

"Oh, it was years ago; she was playing Hermione, a wonderful, statuesque Hermione. It was after the king has refused to believe the oracle, in the trial scene, and the servant comes in to tell the death of their son. It was the last drop in her cup of bitterness. She raised her arm, veiled her face, and seemed to melt and fall like a snow image, so slowly, so quietly. But you are too young ever to have seen that," concluded Miss Elise.

"My mother saw it," said Hope. "She said it was the most effective fall she had ever seen to portray a psychological grief. She taught me how to do it. Of course it would not fit many scenes."

"Do you know," said Miss Emma, "you play wonderfully well? If Louis could always be certain of so sympathetic an interpreter he need not wait long for success. Have you ever thought of going on the stage?"

"You ought to," added Louis.

"I never used to think of anything else, — till my mother died," the girl answered. "Maybe you have seen her, Miss Brent? She was Rose Farron."

"Of course we've seen her!" exclaimed both the old ladies. Then simultaneously, "Can you ever forget her Peg Woffington, Emmy?" "Didn't she break your heart as Camille, Elise?"

Hope sighed. "I think she was very good," she said, "but I never saw her on the stage. When she married she retired, and my father was jealous of the old life. I am afraid they were not always happy, for sometimes she longed to go back; I was born with that longing in

my blood. We lived in a big, rambling farm-house, and she made a companion of me, and we 'play-acted' up in the garret, everything she could find that had a child in it,— scraps and scenes from 'Odette,' 'Miss Multon,' 'Jane Eyre,' 'Richard Third.' I remember how I used to struggle with Arthur's appeal to Hubert; it was so real that it almost gave me hysterics, so after that she made little plays from fairy stories, and we were happy, so happy! She set me reading and learning plays. I knew most of 'Hamlet' and 'Much Ado' and 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Richard' by heart when I was twelve. Then the other two babies came, and when I was sixteen she died, and I had to take care of the children. I used to act and recite for them, but that was the end of my hopes and plans." She stopped, lost in memories both sweet and bitter. "Then my father married again; my stepmother didn't mind the little children, but a grown stepdaughter was in the way and — we didn't agree about the cooking. I hate salt-rising bread!" snapped Hope, with the vindictive force of a sudden hateful memory. "So I came to New York, with my mother's

books, her old plays, her clothes, and a few hundred dollars, and nothing else."

"And couldn't you find any company that suited you?" asked Miss Brent.

"Any of them would have suited me, but remember, I had no experience; I'd never seen twenty plays in my life. I had no acquaintance with theater people, no money, no influence. I wasn't even beautiful, nor young, not to begin stage work at least."

"But you have talent," said Miss Elise. "I should have thought they would have been glad to have you."

"There are hundreds of girls already on the stage who have not only talent, but a fairly good idea of stage business," answered Hope. "They know how to make their exits and their entrances; why should a manager pass them by to take up an utterly unknown quantity? I had written for the local papers, and sold a few stories and magazine articles. I had an introduction to the editor of a Sunday-school paper from our rector, and I made enough writing short stories and serials to keep me alive. That was where I met Bess. She was

furnishing puzzle pictures for it. One night while I was waiting for my bowl of bread and milk and correcting proofs on the restaurant table, Lorraine came in and sat opposite me. Presently she took out a roll of copy and began revising it, and so we fell to talking, and presently when her order came she made me share with her, and nothing will ever taste so good again as that sirloin. We used often to meet after that. Sometimes I paid for the steak and sometimes she did and sometimes we had hash, and finally we went to housekeeping, and then we took Bess in, and so we went along until you found us."

"But why don't you try now?" Louis and Paul asked in the same breath.

Hope shook her head. "It's too late. I don't want to add one more to the list of those who make a living by acting just as they might by plain sewing or bookkeeping. I have gone to the theater whenever I could spare the money. I sat in the cheap seats, but as I forgot everything after the curtain went up it was not such a hardship to me as it would be to you. With my feeling about the stage, its fineness and

dignity and mission, it seems presumption for me to think of it, for I wouldn't want to act unless I could do really good work; it is a vocation, not an avocation."

"Have you ever thought what kind of a part you'd like to play best?" asked Miss Brent.

"Yes, but it wasn't always the same. When I saw Mansfield's Richard Third I thought how when Garrick played the part 'the ladies expressed themselves almost in love with Richard,' but I have never seen a possible Anne. She is always played as a vain, frivolous, foolish woman. My idea of that part would be taken from her first speech to Richard, — 'Mortal eyes cannot endure the devil,' — and I would have her play it as if she were under a spell, something like Blanche Walsh's famous scene in 'Aristocracy.' Hypnotism is a new word, but the thing itself is old, and Gloucester cannot account for his power even by 'the aid of the plain devil, and dissembling looks.' But I didn't mean to take the center of the stage and hold it all this time. Miss Brent, you look as if you would say, 'My soul is heavy and I fain would sleep,' so, as I still have 'some certain

dregs of conscience yet within me,' I'll say good night."

"Well, 'God bless thee, and take meekness out of thy breast,'" responded Miss Brent. "What you need is some wholesome vanity and a press agent."

So the party broke up.

As Louis and Paul joined the boys upstairs, Prince Karl was filling his fountain pen to begin the next chapter, while Ted hung up his overcoat. Louis took a jug of cider from the closet and, filling the glasses, raised his own. "Fellows," he said, "this house will yet appear in the limelight."

"If anybody should ask you," added Prince Karl, "you can say that girls like those are just about out of print, and it was a small edition."

"And beautifully bound," said Ted, thinking of the bright-faced girl he had just left.

"I'll join you in a toast to all of them," said Paul, "but first and most of all to the oldest girls and the jolliest, here's to the Heavenly Twins, who have made life worth living for all of us."

X

"IF ever there was a story that is an insult to human intelligence," remarked Ted with his most judicial and *ipse dixit* expression, "it is 'The Honorable Peter Sterling.'"

It was Saturday night, and the geniuses were gathered in the large double parlors.

"Yes, I mean it," he went on as his hearers looked at him with doubt upon their faces. "It's all right so far as the dirty office is concerned, with the long crack in the plaster, and the dusty books, and the solitude, but when it comes to Peter's worrying along and contriving to pay his rent on a paltry fifteen hundred a year, it makes me tired, not to say disgusted. I don't believe half the lawyers in New York who have been practising for ten years are sure of more of an income than that. Just give me fifteen hundred dollars a year and see me come splurging to the front! What I want to know is, not how to live on fifteen hundred or even half that, but how to get it to live on."

"Or how to live without an income," suggested Louis, "or upon the outgo."

"Or on the net deficit," said Lorraine. "The Honorable Peter is a bit like 'The Duchess' heroes who barely subsist on three or four thousand dollars a year. When one considers the number of people who go on from day to day doing their work, with the wolf always sitting by the kitchen stove, like a hungry house dog, it speaks well for human nature that they keep up the fight."

"Or very poorly for the imagination," said Karl.

"That works both ways," said Hope quickly. "It is the dread of something after death that makes cowards of many of us, who let I dare not wait upon I would. It is when the imagination fails and we can think of no evils worse than those we already endure that resolution retains its native hue. It is when we believe no dreams can come so fearful as the reality, that we are willing and ready to end the heartache and the troubles that make long life a calamity."

"How about those euthanasia stories?" asked

Miss Brent. "How many of you have finished yours? When does the competition close? What, only two of you? Ted, what excuse have you to offer? If you knew the *Grand Prix* Elise and I are going to bestow upon the victor you'd not be so dilatory."

"I can't write it," answered Ted. "I've tried to make a brief for the defendant, but before I reach the argument I always find myself going over to the prosecution. We ought to fight it out. I've no use for a man who tries to dodge. I can't make a hero out of that kind of a fellow."

Lorraine laughed. "Let us hope you'll never be assigned to defend some unfortunate, rashly importunate, who has run counter to the laws of this state. But if you remember Karl's plan, the hero does not actually take his life; he gives it away, and does not even necessarily lose it, save so far as his own initiative is concerned. Neither is it necessary to regard him as a hero. The man who can't screw his courage to the sticking point is just as available for our purposes as the one who can. Wouldn't it have been more heroic for Dr. Jekyll to have

made his own quietus than to wait for Hyde to murder him?"

"You never can make a lawyer see it," said Karl. "He always has a picture of the corpse with a stake through the body buried at the crossroads, and his family disgraced, according to old English law. Yet the Romans, from whom we derived our law originally, always recognized the right of a citizen to dispose of his life as he saw fit. In fact, if a man was under sentence of death his only escape from disgrace lay in being his own executioner. In that case he had an honorable burial and could will away his property. If he waited for the law to take its course, his children were disinherited, and his body exposed to every indignity. Wasn't it Domitian who invented the idea of disgrace as an excuse for the confiscation of the property of those he drove to suicide?"

"Even if he did, the Antonines sustained him and perpetuated the custom," interrupted Ted; but Karl went on dispassionately.

"The prejudice against taking life under any circumstances is largely a Christian idea, yet

few religions lay so much stress on the life to come or depict it in such glowing terms. It seems as if the Christian, with his belief that death is gain, should hold life lightly rather than the Japanese, whose future life is dreary and repellent."

"I think it is the idea of duty," ventured Miss Elise rather timidly. "That is the fundamental difference between the Christian religion and other religions. I suppose duty is the basis of any religion, but I don't know any other that dwells as largely upon our duty to our fellow men. The question with us is what is right, not for ourselves alone, but in the widest possible relation to other people. The Jap is guided by his worship of his ancestors; his supreme duty is to the dead rather than to the living. He ends his life rather than endure what might be construed as an insult to the shades of his great-grandfathers, even if he leaves a family that will be reduced to penury by his action; at the worst, have they not his example? We can't judge a nation that has such different ideals. The question remains, is it right?"

"Who is to say?" answered her sister. "Can we lay down a hard and fast rule of right and wrong? Didn't we glorify the old woman who killed herself that her son might feel himself free to go to fight the Russians? As Karl says, we may sing about lands of pure delight where saints immortal reign, but we don't take any chances of getting there as long as we can avoid it. We hang on, sans eyes, sans teeth, sans everything, a burden to ourselves and everybody else. Solomon said there was a time to die, and when that time comes I have no gratitude to the science that prolongs life under such circumstances."

Karl nodded approvingly. "Every humane society takes the life of animals when it is necessary to relieve them from ceaseless pain," he said; "why should we cease to be humane because the sufferer belongs to humankind rather than to the brute creation? In every hospital, in every asylum, lives are preserved in pain and weariness that are a useless burden to themselves and the community. It costs as much to keep a feeble-minded child in school as to give a normal child the best advantages,

and he can learn such a little then, not enough for life ever to be a joy to him; he will never be intelligently alive. If we are pagans and believe this life is all, is it worth while to live it in such a way? If we are really Christians and believe in the immortality of the soul, why not release him and let him pass on to the life more abundant?"

"Money ought not to enter into it at all," said Ted a little warmly. "We can't kill people just because there are too many of them. Besides, it is all sophistry anyhow. Go back to Sparta and her plan to secure the survival of the fittest, and what do we know or care for Sparta? She has left us nothing but the memory of Leonidas. 'The glory that was Greece' doesn't come down to us from the people who would have killed their Byrons and Popes in infancy. Just eliminate all the physically unfit and see what will happen to art and literature from Homer down to Milton and Prescott, Beethoven and Schumann. There isn't one of us who does not know some soul who has lived on the rack of pain yet kept so sweet, so strong, so sane, that we have felt more envy than pity.

Who is to be a judge, who would be willing to take the responsibility of passing the death sentence wholesale, and to whom are we willing to intrust such power as that?"

"I don't think you understand Karl exactly," said Miss Brent. "His idea is that it is more merciful to release these unhappy ones from the burden of life than to exhaust every means to prolong their lives. But I am inclined to think that before any such action is ever taken we shall have had to entirely revise our code in regard to suicide. Perhaps we are not civilized enough to get along without sickness and pain; we need the schooling in patience and tenderness as well as in medical science; but if the sufferer himself elects to go I can see no reason why we should demand that he stay. What is it Montaigne says? — that 'Nature has ordered one door into life, but a hundred thousand out of it,' and again, that 'living is slavery, if the liberty of dying be taken away. God gives us leave enough when he is pleased to reduce us to such a condition that to live is far worse than to die.'"

Miss Elise, who had disappeared into the

library, returned with a portentous old French volume in her hands. "Now just hear me crush Emmy with her philosophers," she said. "Here on the very next page Montaigne says,— I'll translate it the best I can, — 'It belongs to God alone, who placed us here, not for ourselves only, but for his glory and the service of others, to dismiss us when it shall best please him, and not for us to depart without his permission.' And listen to this: 'It is cowardice, not virtue, to lie in a furrow under a tomb, to evade the blows of fortune.' Besides, who knows which are the incurable diseases? or that they will be incurable to-morrow? Think of the marvels that are being discovered every day. What are you thinking, Hope? You've been in a brown study for ten minutes."

The girl raised her head, and brushed back a refractory lock of hair. "I was thinking," she began hesitatingly, "that I shouldn't agree with any of you, or any of those who are advocating these various plans for the elimination of the unfit, with or without their consent, because you all limit the justification to physical conditions, as if bodily pain were the most

acute in the world. That I do not believe. Only 'in the infinite spirit is room for the pulse of an infinite pain.' I can imagine anguish that would make the rack a flowery bed of ease. We all read of cases of affliction in the San Francisco earthquake, where perhaps but one member of a family was left,— friends, relatives, property all gone, nothing left to begin with and no one left to work for,— would not life be ten times more awful after such an experience than the pangs of the most cruel disease? When the fountains of the great deep of one's soul are broken up, there is far more excuse for finding life unbearable than any physical pain can give. Can you imagine Lazarus, called back from the tomb, ever finding life quite the same again? It seems to me as if he must always have walked apart."

Miss Brent was listening intently. "But, my dear," she said, "such a man can still be useful, while the patient suffering from some hopeless, torturing disease is of no use to himself or any one else."

"How can we say that?" said the girl earnestly. "We are talking of one's right to end

his own life when it becomes intolerable to him, not of our right to pick and choose and take life when we see fit. If we are to issue suicide permits to lepers, and I don't say we should not, I can't see by what logic we deny the claims of my hypothetical Californian. We are not regarding him as a beast of burden to be fed until he can no longer bear the burden; the question is not of what use he may be to the world, but of what value is life to him. When he goes to sleep he lives through it all again. He sees the flames and hears the crack of the rifle that brought merciful release to those who were doomed. He wakens suddenly, feeling again the shock of closing walls and sliding floors. By what curious course of reasoning would you give a release to a man suffering from locomotor ataxia to be a blessed ghost and condemn this man to the nightmare of life in death? I don't say it isn't right to give the merciful cup to the first, but if you do, how can you refuse it to the second?"

There was silence for a few moments; every one was conscious of some strange, electrical tension, then Ted broke it abruptly.

"That's it. If you begin, where is the line to be drawn? It sounds fairly well until you begin to work it out in detail, and then it falls to pieces of its own weight and weakness. Let's give it up, and find some less morbid theme for our experiment."

"I second the motion," said Miss Elise. "Let's have something cheerful and happy. There's enough misery without our imagining any more."

And though they changed the subject, and banished the gloom it had occasioned, it remained a vague phantom of unrest, haunting the minds of Miss Elise and Hope.

XI

IT is a good thing to possess ten talents, or even five, or but one, but it is a bad thing to overestimate the value of one's possessions. Miss Brent's attic and basement specimens of the genus genius struggled along as best they could; and as they were about equally gifted in different ways, it did not occur to them that they were above and apart from the rest of their fellows. The fact that there are thousands of young men and women in New York who never write anything, who cannot sing or play or draw a picture, who do not read and to whom study would be a hardship, — this gigantic fact, palpable and obvious as it may be, did not present itself to their minds. Each one admired the achievements of the others more than his own. Prince Karl was going to be a mining engineer; he could not only write a story, but he knew the secrets of the rocks, and he stood high in his classes and bade fair to take all sorts of honors at Columbia. And if Ted had

not succeeded in literature, and was still briefless, he was a barrister nevertheless. Louis was on the highway to success, and although that highway is much like the rocky road to Dublin, still none of the Brent household doubted that he was bound to arrive; and Paul's music and verse made the cares that infest the day flee without waiting to fold their tents.

Lorraine's political sketches had become something of a feature, and she was on the pay-roll regularly. Uncle Peter Bright had found a place for Hope with a publisher, where she read and read, and learned something of what the public is supposed to want, which helped her to dispose of some of her own articles; and between Hope and Lorraine considerable illustrating was thrown into the eager hands of little Bess, who was blossoming into a most beautiful womanhood.

Over them all was the unfailing faith and affection of the Heavenly Twins, who would not have believed it possible for one ugly duckling to find a place among their young swans.

As the summer came on the daily, hourly

struggle grew less for most of the young people. Prince Karl was preparing for a trip to the Rockies to geologize and see mining at first hand; Louis was in the throes of watching the rehearsals of his farce, which was to go on at one of the summer theaters where Paul played second violin.

But things were in a bad way for Teddy. As the days passed he seemed to grow a little thinner and lankier each day. The doctor across the hall suggested that erelong they might open opposition stalls in a dime museum as the living skeleton and the ossified man.

"Yes; we can realize Sidney Smith's wish to take off his flesh and sit in his bones," he answered with a rather feeble smile; "but I can't say that I see much fun in it." He looked across the hall at his orderly desk and bleakly empty office. He had had that office for two years the coming fall, — ever since he had been admitted to the bar, — and he had never been so much as retained. He had never had a client, save as now and then he had been appointed to defend some one. He had written a weekly New York letter to his home paper,

and once in a while he had sold an article, but the end was in sight.

He looked up at the doctor's sign, "Frances Silverton, M.D.," and at her office, the counterpart of his own, except that, being a woman, hers was a little less dingy.

"Doctor," he said shortly, "let's cut it. There's no use trying any longer. Let's go West and grow up with the country. New York is no place for poor people. Let's go to some little place far out West and take our chances that there will be more malaria, which is good for your business, and more bad blood, which is good for mine."

The doctor shook her head. "No," she said, "no; who was that sage who said, 'God Almighty hates a quitter'? There are more people who hate each other to the point of going to law about it in New York than anywhere else in this country. Judging from my experience, nobody ever dies a natural death here, with or without medical aid; yet I have faith to believe my time's coming, and I'm getting plenty of experience, if it doesn't bring in any money. Some new bacillus will come to the rescue."

"But when? Bacilli are slow and time is fleeting."

"Yes, I know," she answered; "but you can be sure of one thing. There's no place where there's a better show than New York. It may take longer to succeed, but when success comes, —*when* it comes it is worth having, and means something anywhere else you may go. But succeed in any other city in America and New York is still ahead of you, frowning and impregnable, her harbor full of torpedoes. Stay by it awhile longer. It will pay in the end."

"Perhaps," he answered. "At the present rate I'm afraid it will not pay in time, or enough to meet the funeral expenses."

XII

SUMMER had come in good earnest. The streets fairly palpitated with the heat, and the big, gloomy office building where Ted spent most of his time was half deserted. The doctor found plenty of occupation, if small remuneration; the lawyers were away for their summer vacations and the other tenants kept office hours in a desultory fashion, if at all. Ted walked home, thinking wrathfully of the stupidity of fate, and the long hard climb before we can even catch a glimpse of the Delectable Mountains.

When he reached the house he went down the three steps into the basement instead of up the three flights to the attic. The girls were a sympathetic lot, but he rather wished that Hope would be at home; there was more in common between them; they could join in the hymn of the conquered. He had never minded being poor so much until he met Bess.

But neither Hope nor Bess were there. In-

stead he was startled by the sight of Miss Brent bending over a pile of Lorraine's copy and wiping her tear-dimmed glasses. Lorraine was walking up and down the room, her eyes blazing out of her white face, and her hands clenched.

"What on earth is the matter?" he asked. "What has happened? Is any one hurt, — is Bess —"

"Oh, no!" answered Miss Brent. "It's Lorraine's story. Tell him about it, Lorraine; I can't. Sit down, Teddy."

The girl went on walking up and down until she gained a little more self-control.

"It's the Riordan case," she said, trying to keep the quiver out of her lips. "You must have read about it; the papers have been full of it."

"Good Lord! They haven't put you on *that*, have they?" he asked disgustedly. "The idea of sending a woman like you to look up a miserable lot of little degenerates and cut-throats like those!"

"Hush!" she said excitedly. "You are a lawyer; you have no business to take sides,

still less to 'take life without the form of justice.' You ought not to believe in the mission of the daily press to act as judge, jury, and executioner. What do you know about it anyway?"

"I know what every one knows, that this gang of boys are the usual cigarette-smoking, dime-novel reading little toughs; that they call themselves the Jesse James gang, and that they shot and murdered a playfellow in cold blood," he answered.

"You mean you know what you've read," she said; "is that what you call evidence? Those children had never heard of Jesse James until one of our enterprising newspaper artists stood them up before his camera and christened them so. There isn't a scintilla of proof against them."

"Didn't one of the boys confess?" he asked.

"Yes, three of them confessed," she answered. "Three of them confessed to me, after the police had 'sweated' them for hours."

"Then what more do you want?" he asked a little impatiently.

"Well, you see, they all confessed to different

things; their stories didn't hang together," she replied. "The essential facts are these: The little Riordan boy was sent to bring home the cow. He had to pass the place where these other boys were in swimming; it was a kind of woodsy little playground, not far from the water. Later he was found, shot dead in these woods, where the Brown boys and Roy Collins had been at play. A boy named Willie Hinckley says that Roy shot Patsy, and Riordan made the complaint; the boys were all arrested and taken to jail without a moment to see their folks. The youngest is eight years old, and the oldest seventeen. The eight-year-old boy has confessed, also one who is about eleven, and who is subject to epileptic attacks, and the boy named Hinckley, who made the charge originally, and has taken it back and then repeated it twice since."

"Do you mean you think they didn't do it?" asked Ted incredulously.

"I'm perfectly certain they didn't," she answered, "but how can they prove it?"

"They don't have to," he responded quickly. "The burden of proof is on the prosecution;

they must prove that the crime was committed. The accused are not compelled to show their innocence. That's as old as Magna Charta," he finished conclusively.

"Nonsense," she said curtly. "Stuff and nonsense. They have been sentenced already. Half the papers have had leaders on the increase of crime, and the number of arrests among the young; the other half are moralizing over the evil effects of novel reading, and asking what shall be done with these young reprobates. Every one of them has bunches of scavengers out looking up evidence to send these half dozen children to prison for life."

"And what have you been doing on the case?" asked Ted.

"I? Well, Maxwell sent me to write my impressions, honestly, and I went, with very much the same expectations as you would have had, from what you have just said. I did not find what I expected, but seven boys, one of them crying hysterically for his mother, and nothing about any of them to justify the belief that they were in any way different from dozens of other country boys. You know it happened

out in a little suburb that is just like the country."

Ted was beginning to look bewildered. "What have you written about it?" he said.

She picked up the first page of her copy, where she had written in a bold, free hand, "For the Defense in the Riordan Case."

"You don't mean it!" he said. "Oh, I suppose the lawyer they have retained has a pull with your paper!"

"No," she answered steadily. "They haven't any lawyer; they are too poor to employ one. They consulted Ward, but if they mortgaged everything they have in the world they couldn't pay his retainer fee. I suppose the court will assign some one to defend them, but that will amount to nothing. Public sentiment is all the other way. I don't know why we should have a public prosecutor any more than a public defender. The defense of these boys will be a mere empty formality, and the memory of their mothers' faces haunts me. After I had seen them I went to their homes, and I know they are innocent, but how can we prove it? and it will kill their mothers!"

Her voice broke, and Miss Brent wiped her glasses again and pushed the copy across the table to Ted. "Read it, my dear," she said, "and then, if you are willing to take the case, I would like to retain your services. The boys have found a defender, but they still need a lawyer."

He read the long, circumstantial story carefully. There were treacherous breaks in his voice and his eyes were bright as he laid it aside and said slowly, "I dare hardly call myself a lawyer, but such as I am, if they have no one else, I will do the best I can for the defense."

XIII

TED was as good as his word, or even a trifle better. Having undertaken the defense of the boys, he went over the case with Lorraine, point by point, making notes and planning his campaign, and the next morning the two set out for the prison where the defendants were confined, the gravity of the charge against them making the ordinary house of detention for juvenile offenders out of the question.

Lorraine's defense of the accused, which was out in the morning edition, did not make her a more welcome visitor at the prison, for prisons are conducted on the belief that it is well-nigh impossible to make a mistake in arresting any one. Nevertheless, her daring in taking the side of the under dog — such a helpless, unfortunate, unromantic, yellow under dog — won the admiration, if not the approval, of the department, and the doors swung open before her.

They groped their way through the dark corridors to the cell where the older and presumably more desperate of the criminal children were confined. The oldest boy, Arthur Brown, looked wistfully out from behind the bars, and when the door was opened stood in the narrow aperture and answered Ted's questions. He was rather a gentle-faced boy, between seventeen and eighteen, and as they stood a cat walked into his cell. He picked her up, with a quick, loving motion, and held her against his neck, where she purred contentedly.

"Please don't mind my hands," he said. "I'd been shoveling dirt where they're making an excavation, and I haven't had any chance to wash."

"Arthur," said Lorraine, "I've been to see your folks; they have perfect confidence in you, and you must not be unhappy. This gentleman, Mr. Theodore Erskine, is going to defend you. Tell him all you can, and tell him the exact truth."

The boy stopped petting the cat and looked at them in astonishment. "We haven't any

money," he said simply. "Father's got a cow, if that would be any use to you; but we haven't any money at all, because father's been sick, and I was the only one that was making anything. I don't know what they will do without me. Roy Collins' folks can afford a lawyer; but of course time is money with you, sir, and we can't expect you to do this for nothing, and we haven't anything; I wish we could have you."

Ted gulped and colored. Time was the only thing in the world which he possessed in abundance.

"Never mind about that," he said hurriedly. "Don't think anything about the money, or the cow, but tell me all you know about this and help me to clear your little brothers; I think from what I know that your own alibi is clear. But if Roy is guilty, you cannot afford to shield him; you must speak the truth to save your brothers."

"My folks never allowed any of us to lie," he said slowly. "My little brother, that they said confessed, used the words that was put into his mouth; don't I know? They tried the

same thing with me. Wasn't this so, wasn't that so, didn't I know that Roy had broken down and owned that he did it, and all that sort of thing for hours and hours, and nothing to eat, and part of the time shut in a dark cell. No wonder Jimmy finally said whatever they told him to. But it isn't so. Roy never had a gun, except an old muzzle-loading musket that burst the first time we fired it off, Fourth of July. What would we have killed Patsy for? He was a nice little chap."

It was a long, hard day's work to interview each of the boys and their parents, but if Lorraine's views had not met with favor at police headquarters she was received with benedictions and open arms at the homes of the accused. When she explained that a friend who was interested had employed Mr. Erskine to defend the Brown children, without any cost to their parents, Miss Brent was calendared as a saint at once, while Teddy was regarded as a tall angel; certainly his raiment was shining at every seam. The parents of Roy Collins had employed an attorney named Harrison, but as the cases were so closely allied, Teddy wasted

no time in conferring with him, and then went home to draw up his first papers in his first case, a case already a nine-days' wonder, and destined to hold "top of column" when it should come off.

XIV

THE exigencies of the defense made it necessary for the attorneys for the Brown boys and the Collins boy to have frequent consultations, and a fast friendship sprung up between Ted and Mr. Harrison, who, though a much older man than himself, had not been in New York for a great length of time, and had been glad to take the Collins defense because of the opportunity it afforded him to make a *début* in a somewhat spectacular trial. He had made his terms to suit the emergency in his own affairs. He was not inexperienced in his profession, but merely one of those who having succeeded elsewhere had his spurs yet to win in New York. He was a man of fine presence, literary tastes, and a winning personality, though at times Ted found him somewhat cold-blooded.

Strangely enough, Lorraine, who had been of no small service to them, took an aversion to Harrison from the very first.

"Don't be unreasonable," Ted argued. "You're too good a fellow for such whims. The Dr. Fell attitude is unworthy of you."

They were going over the case for the twentieth time, while Bess sketched away at the other end of the table, and Hope rested in the cozy corner. "What are you two quarreling about now?" she asked.

"Over my *confrère* in the defense," Ted answered. "I think Maurice Harrison is all right, and, without being able to give a single reason, Lorraine dislikes him so she can scarcely be civil."

"Maurice Harrison?" queried Hope vaguely. "What has he to do with the Riordans? I thought he was literary."

Lorraine looked up quickly. "Why, do you know him?" she asked.

"Yes, no, I don't know," she answered. "Is he a tall, blonde man, well built, rather handsome? I know a Harrison like that, but he is a writer. He has a novel that is to come out this fall or winter some time. I read the manuscript, and my verdict was so favorable that the firm showed it to him, and — and so

we were introduced, and I've met him a time or so since," rather lamely.

"I guess it's the same man all right," answered Ted. "He's a rattling good lawyer, keeps 'clear and cool' like the weather predictions for to-day, and is up to all the tricks and dodges of the law. He has given me lots of good points and is almost as much interested in my clients as his own. Now, don't you think that is unselfish? Don't you like him, Hope? It's the same man, I'm sure, for he told me he had a story coming out."

Before Hope could answer, for she hesitated several moments, Lorraine joined with Ted: "Yes, do tell us about him, Hope. To my mind the one thing of which Maurice Harrison is absolutely incapable is unselfishness. Of course he takes an interest in Ted's clients; he has to; how could he protect his own if he didn't? Besides, didn't you say it was his first case in New York that is any ways striking?"

Hope hesitated still, and Ted said encouragingly, "'Speak, and let the worst be known, speaking may relieve you,'" and, thus urged, she went on.

"To tell the truth, I've found him very interesting; of course I haven't talked business with him, for literature is not his business but only a by-path. He is well read and has traveled considerable. I believe the family come from Philadelphia, — I think his parents live there now, — but he has been in the West for some years. Possibly if I met him when he had on his professional manner I should not like him."

Lorraine looked disappointed, and then said, rather irritably: "I'd be willing to wager my next 'exclusive' that his interest in this case is largely that of the literary ragpicker. He is contemplating a murder story, and he wants to study the type from infancy to age. He has never been really more than half sure of Roy's innocence; that's one reason why I dislike him so; he isn't fair to the child, but now I can understand better. You'll see. His next story will have a lonely wood and a corpse in it, and an owl that inquires, 'Whoo, whoo, whoo,' from above the mangled remains, while the blood-shot moon sinks behind the black and somber forest. I know his type. Has he decided yet

whether to have a snowstorm, or is the horrid deed to take place under the affrighted eyes of the man in the harvest moon?"

Hope gasped, for Mr. Harrison had confided to her, during one of the luncheons they had had together recently, that his next story was to be one of plot, and they had discussed the relative virtues of snow with its enveloping pall, and rain, leaving the ground in good condition for telltale footprints. "Oh, don't, Lorraine!" she said; "this case is getting on your nerves, and you are so anxious about it that you are unduly suspicious. Mr. Harrison is very much a gentleman, and has quite uncommonly fine manners."

"Yes, as mild mannered a man as ever scuttled a ship," muttered Lorraine under her breath; adding aloud, "Well, I hope I'm mistaken, but his eyes are too close together to suit me, and he's as given to moods and caprices as a 'dope-fiend' or a 'Miss Flora MacFlimsy.' I've no doubt he can be entertaining, but — well, I'll leave you two to praise him all you like. I'm going to see Miss Brent; she's worth a million of him." And she vanished into

the gloom of the hallway, annoyed with Ted, almost provoked with Hope, and more than ever prejudiced against the man who had brought the first shadow between her and two of her best friends.

XV

WITH the first of September Prince Karl returned, and his arrival was celebrated from basement to garret. He brought with him a trunk of ore, a red Indian tan, and an insatiable appetite, not to mention a brain teeming with the romance of the hills. Lorraine almost wept upon his neck for joy, for there seemed to have come an intangible something between herself and Hope. Louis was wholly absorbed in a new play, and as it was impossible to discuss Ted's chief interest in life without referring to the objectionable Harrison, they had tacitly shelved it. So Lorraine devoted all her spare time to the Miss Brents, yet there also she felt rather than saw the shadow of a cloud. Miss Emma did not seem quite herself, though Miss Elise was apparently happily unconscious of any change.

"I think I'll give it up," said Miss Emma one dark afternoon when the postman brought back two of her most cherished animal stories.

"I'm too old, or too dull, or too something to get into print. I'd better be fixing my attention on the tomb and preparing for death. By the way, how do people prepare for death? Renan once wrote a play, of which nobody has ever heard except people who like digging up literary curiosities, to prove that if we knew the world was coming to an end next week, the whole swinish multitude of us would rush violently down the hill and drown ourselves in a sea of unlicensed debauchery. What would you do if you knew your time was limited?"

"Keep on working," said Lorraine prosaically. "When it got down to the last few days I'd burn my letters and papers, give away the few scraps I have to give, and arrange with the nearest crematory for the last sad rites. Then, like the noble three hundred at Thermopylæ, I'd sit down and comb my hair. I'd like to leave that to Uncle Peter," she added reflectively. "I feel as if he has a claim on it. But what a question! Even if one's manuscript does come back, there is no use in being snuffed out like Chatterton or slain by the lack of reviewers."

"I can't seem to hit the popular fancy," said Miss Brent. "I don't get anywhere with all my writing, except as the papers take a letter now and then. It would never occur to me to record the fact that I've never seen a purple cow. The singular fact that I've never seen a little colt with coat as white as snow, and where we get our horses white I'd really like to know, has never seemed to me of sufficiently vital importance to warrant rushing into print with it, yet that is as remarkable as the narrative of the lilac mooley."

"Maybe that's one trouble," said Lorraine. "If you had hurried to the publisher with your white colt before the lavender cow maybe you would have achieved everlasting fame. Thank heaven for the people who are willing to amuse us; they never get any more than their due when they get the best. Most of us don't dare to write unless we think we have a revelation, and then we complain because 'vanity is still on deck and humble virtue gets it in the neck.'"

"Like Lewis Carroll, with his horrid old arithmetics, being ashamed of Alice and the Jabberwock," said the old lady. "I dare to

be as funny as I can, but it takes real genius to be funny. Anybody can be serious without being wise."

"Now here's an idea," said Lorraine, "that came to me when I was reviewing, but I've never worked it up and you're more than welcome to it. It is a plea for a literary humane society."

"On behalf of the readers?"

"No, for the prevention of cruelty to animals in fiction. There seems to be no limit to the abuse that authors are willing to permit, or even encourage. I can stand what's-his-name killing the aurochs, and the general gladiatorial slaughters in 'Quo Vadis,' but when it comes to torturing a dog the way the vicar does in 'Jack Raymond' I object. In 'The Conquest of Canaan' the whole village takes a hand in the persecution of a dog, and the way heroes and heroines ride and drive is a caution. It's the lady in 'Dorothy Vernon' and the man in 'None but the Brave.' You remember how 'Richard Carvel' exploits that horse, jumping him over houses and racing him about London, while in 'The Leopard's Spots' Dixon heartlessly drives a bay mare ten miles in forty-nine

minutes, over country roads up hill and down, so that she drops dead. I object to these examples of cruelty being placed in the hands of the children of the land."

"I'll do it," said Miss Brent with much gusto. "Didn't you hate the man who killed Kroof's cub in 'The Heart of the Ancient Wood'? I hope she never married him, and if she did — I don't mean Kroof, but the girl — I'm sure they lived unhappily ever after. But do you think I can? I'm afraid I can never be a really intellectual woman."

Miss Elise, who had come in a few minutes before with the tea things, laughed and said consolingly: "Never mind, Emmy. I never knew but one intellectual woman who prided herself on that fact. She could not keep house or sew, and her flannels always showed at the wrist. There comes Hope down the street. She walks as if her name were Madame Atlas; suppose I go and call her in to have some tea with us."

"Your sister's description reminds me of the lady who said her friend was not vulgar; she was not refined; she was the kind of person who keeps a parrot. I shall never strive

for intellectuality again. What *is* the matter, Hope?" for the girl had come in and dropped down beside Miss Brent, the very picture of despondency.

"Oh, it's 'Goliath'!" she said. "I've been thinking of that story that was so good the author couldn't sell anything else; 'My Wife's Deceased Sister,' wasn't it? Well, that's the trouble. Those people had taken a lot of things before 'Goliath,' but they've never been pleased with anything since. They are as kind as possible and they say different things, but they all mean the same; nothing I've sent them has come up to 'Goliath.' Oh, for a David with his ever-ready sling to have slain my ogre!"

"Perhaps you are trying to wear the armor of Saul and it doesn't fit," said Miss Brent whimsically. "As near as I can figure it out, that is what's the matter with me. We haven't found our line yet. Don't you remember what Arnold says?

'And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown on each talent and power,
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves.'

One of these days some publisher will discover you and your fortune will be made."

"No," said Hope resolutely, "I used to think that, but I know better now. I've got all the chance there is and so has everybody else. If one publisher doesn't like your work there are dozens of others, and the way the Arthurs have hung on to me, and tried to help me with all kinds of suggestions, and written me every now and then to send them something, shows plainly enough that the publishers are just as anxious to discover latent talent as any of us can be to be discovered. I'm not so jaundiced by defeat that I can't see that. The fault is not in the publishers, but in me."

"I wish she'd fall in love," said Lorraine tempestuously. "Nothing would do her so much good."

"Never!" cried Miss Brent. "She'd marry and the world would lose her. Fancy a God-given genius attending to the family marketing and mending while the ink dries in her fountain pen. Anybody can get married, but only a few people can write a story like 'Goliath'!"

"Oh, I don't care anything about her getting married," Lorraine answered, oblivious of the fact that Hope had blushed furiously and then turned pale and colored again. "It isn't in the least necessary for the affair to go so far as that. Kipling says, 'Next to a requited attachment, one of the most convenient things that a young man can carry about with him, at the beginning of his career, is an unrequited attachment.' I'm convinced if Hope once had a case of heart disease of the malignant type, no palpitations need apply, that she would find herself."

The old lady sniffed unbelievingly. "You were evidently brought up on the belief that whatever hurts does good. That's orthodox, but I don't believe it myself. Love isn't the djinn or the Aladdin's lamp of life. Goodness knows it isn't generally even the magic carpet that makes easy going. It's the little old man of the sea. Don't pay any attention to her, Hope. Just be a genius, and don't be in a hurry to take up with the good loaf of brown bread prescribed for geniuses. You will arrive without putting yourself under a steam-crusher

to hasten the good work. By the steps in the hall I should say Bess and Teddy have come in. If Lorraine must have a love affair and can't be happy till she gets it, that looks rather promising. Have some more tea, Hope."

Though the girl drank her tea and tried to shake off her depression, the effort was apparent, and when they were alone that evening Lorraine made her a bowl of catnip tea and insisted on her going to bed.

"No, it isn't that I'm tired or sick, Lorraine; but the truth is so plain that I can't deceive myself any longer, and yet, don't you see? it is like giving up life itself when one resigns one's whole plan and scheme of life. I had to give up the stage when my heart was set on it; then, because I had succeeded in amusing the children, I thought perhaps it was in me to write the stories I had grown used to telling, but it was the instinct of the actor, not of the creator, that made me tell my stories well. I don't know exactly what the sting of death may be, but the sting of life is to write 'Failure' when one has tried with all one's heart and soul.

If I had written a euthanasia story it would have been about some one who realized that the light of the whole world dies with the setting sun. Don't try to comfort me; not yet, not yet."

XVI

AS the time drew near that was to see the beginning of the case of The State *vs.* Roy Collins, Arthur Brown, *et al.*, Ted grew nervous, and one Sunday, not long before the momentous day, he and Lorraine took the long journey to the suburban town near where the tragedy had taken place, and walked out to the small wood. The leaves were falling, and the thickets silent, the birds flown. They sat down on a log and recounted the case to each other.

"There is one thing in which I have been disappointed with myself," said Ted discontentedly. "I think I have done fairly well with the rest of it, but so far I haven't been able to find any clue to the real criminal. In this kind of an affair there is a lack of motive that is baffling to begin with, and yet I am certain that there was a motive; that's where Harrison and I differ. He intends to dwell upon the probability that it was an accident, as people often went hunting about here. The Browns

believe it was an accident; they say people often shot at targets, or made targets of the trees, and they think it was a stray shot. Poor little Patsy Riordan; it wasn't worth the while of the detective force to track his slayer, and I'm afraid I'm not a combination of M. Lecoq and Sherlock Holmes."

"I don't believe it was an accident either," answered Lorraine. "I've always had a theory about this case, but, as in another instance, I have no better reason than 'because,' and I'll admit that is not much of a reason."

"Let's have it anyhow," said Ted, idly turning over the leaves with his foot. "We are sitting on the log where the boys sat who witnessed the murder, according to Willie Hinckley's confession, and Patsy was lying over there under that tree."

Lorraine looked at the tree curiously. It was not very large, and about eight or nine feet from the ground one bare branch stood out almost at right angles with the tree.

"Do you respectable New Yorkers ever have lynchings?" she asked.

"Why, I don't remember," he said, racking

his brain to recall an instance. "I suppose we have had them at some time in our career. Men are brothers down under their skin, North and South, East and West, same as the colonel's lady and Judy. What made you think of it?"

"The tree," answered Lorraine. "Do you like ghost stories? No? There's no accounting for tastes. Now I do; also I once compiled a scrap-book of superstitions, and one section of it dealt with legends and strange tales about trees. One doesn't have to believe them to find them interesting. If you will look at that tree carefully, you will see that it is just the kind of a tree a lynching party would seek. You will perceive also that while the other trees are still fairly green, that one has fallen into the sere and yellow leaf. One shake and it would stand denuded of even its last leaf."

"I don't see the ghost," said Ted.

Lorraine sank her voice to a sepulchral whisper. "When a tree has been made accessory before or even after the fact, *particeps criminis*, I believe you call it, in a crime, it never gets over it. Its nature is too fine to withstand the shock. There is a haunted apple

tree in a Massachusetts town under which a murder was committed; the apples it bears are streaked with crimson to the core, and any Southerner can tell you that the tree that has served as a gallows dies and stands a blasted monument to the evil that men do."

"I've often thought," Ted answered, "what it would mean if inanimate nature had a voice. In France they believe it has, to a certain extent. You know no one can be convicted of a crime without being confronted with his prey, and the victim is kept in the morgue for a year or so, perhaps, just as he is found, that the 'confrontation,' as they call it, may be possible. When there is a very awful murder they reproduce the scene of it: if it was in a room, they take all the furniture and make another room just like it, and when they have the man they believe guilty they take him down into this horrible subterranean place, and suddenly confront him with the scene and the victim, just as he left it. Miss Brent was telling me about such a room that she saw in the morgue in Paris when she was there. They say nine-tenths of the criminals will break down and

confess under these circumstances. Now that tree could tell the truth if it could speak, for whatever was done, was done under its very branches."

"The tree isn't dying for nothing," said Lorraine. "It knows more than it tells."

"Naturally, since it knows all and tells nothing. Let's go and consult the dryad, if she hasn't fled."

They walked across the dry, hard ground, with its litter of rustling leaves and yellowing grass, and Lorraine leaned against the trunk of the tree while Ted caught the branch and with a quick jerk swung himself up amidst a shower of yellow leaves. Lorraine turned toward him, her face pale and startled.

"Something dropped inside the tree," she said in a frightened voice.

"What?" he cried excitedly, clinging to the branch.

"Reach over to the crotch," she said, "and see if there isn't a hollow."

He slid along the drooping branch until he reached the trunk of the tree. "Yes," he said, "there's a small hole." He thrust his hand

into it, and the arm to the elbow. "The whole trunk must be hollow," he said; "I might have known it by looking at it."

Lorraine was looking at the tree fixedly. "That tree holds your clue," she said. "When you shook it something heavy fell. Don't you remember the inquest showed that the wound was made with a thirty-two caliber cartridge, and one of the things that struck me first was that the boys all told different stories about the gun, and none of any kind was ever found? The detectives didn't even find a gun in Riordan's house, though the neighbors say he used to shoot at the mark too."

"You don't mean — oh, but if it was a gun, why didn't it go off when it fell? Why didn't whoever put it here take it away? Why didn't it fall to the bottom in the first place? It must have been just a piece of rotted wood."

"No," she insisted. "It fell heavily. It didn't go off because the trigger had been pulled and the hammer was down on an empty cartridge. Whoever put it there couldn't reach it to take it away; it probably slipped from his fingers and caught midway on wood that has

rotted since, so that when you shook the tree it gave way. At first he did not dare come to this spot, haunted both by the detectives and his child's blood — "

"You don't think Riordan did it?" Ted cried.

"I don't think," she answered quickly. "I don't think anything, except that this tree can tell us what we want to know, but not being Indians we don't carry tomahawks with us, and how are we to find out? We may have been watched. We can't both leave to go find a hatchet, even if we could account for such a singular request. How about your knife? The bark on this side looks thin, and as if the trunk under it might be rotten."

Ted drew out his knife — a rough-handled, strenuous looking affair, reminiscent of his youth — and set to work. First he cut off a piece of the bark, large enough to allow his hand to pass through, and placed it carefully on one side. "We'll hide our tracks if we can," he said, and then began hacking away. It was slow work, and the sun had set and the moon was rising before the sound wood was carved away and his knife struck through. In

a minute more he had thrust in his hand and brought out what they expected, a rusted revolver, thirty-two caliber. As they bent over it in the growing moonlight, two initials rudely carved in the handle were plainly visible, — "P. R." They looked in each other's faces in silence. Then Ted carefully put the chips he had made inside the tree, slipped the bark back in place, fastened it with a few tiny wedges, and they started homeward.

"Still, it doesn't prove anything," said Ted.

"No," she admitted, "it doesn't, but it gives a clue. Now we must find the motive."

"I've got the motive," he answered slowly. "I never told you or any one, but I have the same feeling about Riordan that you have, and I tried to learn all I could about him. This is his second wife. Patsy's mother died over a year ago; her life had been insured in Patsy's behalf. It was only a small sum, say five hundred dollars, but to a man like Riordan it would have been enough. Besides, he had an ungovernable temper. He had the name of treating his family badly, and Patsy's body bore the marks of his anger when it was buried. But I

couldn't get any further. There was no evidence against him, and he was a wreck of misery —"

"Or fear," suggested Lorraine.

"— at the preliminary hearing; I'll have to talk this over with Harrison, and try to figure it out."

Lorraine grew frigid at once. "I hope you will do nothing of the kind," she said. "Don't you see here is your chance for a 'confrontation' scene of your own? You've got as much at stake as he has in this case; don't give him the best dramatic situation in it to make copy out of, and a reputation for himself. Keep still, and see what more you can learn; find out if Riordan doesn't intend to leave here as soon as this trial is over."

"Well, since this is mostly your contribution to the case, and but for you I wouldn't have had it at all, I think I ought to regard you as senior counsel, and if you don't want anything said, I'll say nothing. But what a fearful thing it is; can you realize it?"

"'From battle, murder, and sudden death,'" half whispered Lorraine, and they finished together in hushed voices, "'Good Lord, deliver us!'"

XVII

THE Riordan case had been nearly forgotten long before it was reached on the docket. Lorraine's article had taken some of the spectacular features away from it, from the journalistic standpoint, and if the prosecution had developed anything new or sensational it had kept it out of the papers. The poverty of the families concerned made it a foregone conclusion that the accused would be summarily disposed of and hustled off to prison and reformatory with that through-train speed that is apt, in such cases, to offset the usual law's delays. There were other capital cases involving reputations, property, what not, defended by men who had established professional positions. The curious found more interesting criminals than the half-dozen frightened children.

The courtroom was large, dingy, and bare, and when the Riordan case was called the spectators' seats were nearly empty. A few scholarly looking men were present, evidently

prepared to make a psychological study of the accused, who sat at one side of the door, just within the railing. The younger children had little comprehension of the occasion, but as often as the accustomed smile came to their faces one glance at their parents, sitting by them in stony, white-faced misery, drove it away, leaving in its place an expression of mingled surprise and fear.

Roy Collins was deadly pallid and emaciated. His mother, a nervous little woman, sat by him, holding his slim, white hand in hers, — the same awkward paw that used to be so brown and so seldom clean. There was a hard, defiant glitter in her eyes, and scarlet spots burned on her cheeks. The boy's father, on the other side of him, looked broken and worn.

Mrs. Brown, seated by Arthur, with the little boys about them, or sitting on their father's knees, made no attempt to keep back the tears. Some neighbors who had come with them looked about curiously, and then turned back to the pathetic little group with sympathetic faces.

Farther away from the railing that shut out

the spectators sat Peter Riordan, haggard of countenance, his head bowed on his hands.

As soon as the case began it was evident that the acting district attorney did not believe in killing flies with a steam-hammer. He felt sure the case was to be an easy victory, and regarded Harrison with disdain and Ted as a mere babe in arms, who knew little and would not dare to do anything, even if he did not forget the small amount of legal lore at his command. It was not until Ted had challenged the third juror "for cause," because he admitted a scientific interest in penology, that the prosecution realized that Ted was not quite so young as he looked.

True, Teddy had never had a case, but his knowledge of court practice was not wholly gleaned from the printed page. Having no suits of his own to attend to, he had made it a practice to spend hours every week in the different courts of the city, watching the conduct of any trial of importance that might be going on. Fresh from his books he appreciated nice points as they arose, and the practical determination of moot questions, before

his eyes, was worth much. Nevertheless, the morning the Riordan case began he was on an extreme tension that was well-nigh intolerable. He had ideas of his own of the sympathy to be accorded to the younger members of his profession, and also a firm belief that no lawyer should lose his first case; he should not take a case for his *début* in which he could not believe with all his mind and strength that justice and equity, which are legally quite different, belonged to his client. He had seen men of experience lose, simply for lack of preparation; a man with unlimited time, he thought, should not fail from this cause. While he believed he would succeed in clearing the accused boys, he could not fail to recognize that this was not at all the kind of a case upon which he had relied to prove his theory; there was so little law and so much fact in it. Neither did he trust to the indifference with which district attorneys often prepare and try their cases. Nash's term of office was nearing its conclusion, and is not a prosecuting attorney known by the number of convictions he makes? However unique the suit might be from a senti-

mental standpoint, he knew that the formalities of the trial would present little beyond the usual routine, saving the one feature upon which, more than anything else, he was relying.

When the case was called for trial Harrison was absent, and Ted secured a brief delay, and sent a messenger after him. It had been reached sooner than was expected, still he was a little annoyed that Harrison should have taken any chances, and after half an hour proceeded to trial without him.

In the selection of the jury he took extraordinary care. The district attorney was inclined to ridicule his close examination of some of the panel, and Harrison, when he hurried in an hour late, was a little impatient also, but Ted went on in his own way. He exercised the right of peremptory challenge in several cases where he believed that the would-be juror had more interest in proving theories than in judging mankind, and also excused several young, unmarried men. He was after the milk of human kindness, and he believed it would be more likely to be found among those who

had boys of their own. When the twelve good men and true were chosen, he was quite satisfied.

As the prosecuting attorney warmed to his work, his voice rang out through the halls of the courthouse and some of the reporters straggled in. He dwelt upon the enormity of the crime, and the degeneracy of the accused, who, he said, had been the bane of the neighborhood. Their bodies had been ruined by cigarette smoking, and their imaginations inflamed by reading pernicious books. Though young in years they were old in vice, and Patsy Riordan had incurred their ill will by the very fact that he was a more than ordinarily good child. True to their vicious instincts, they had murdered him in cold blood. He called attention to the father of this victim of youthful depravity, a mere wreck of his erstwhile manhood, and dilated upon his suffering when he found his only child foully murdered. He set forth what he expected to prove with such certainty that Walter Davis, a *Herald* reporter sitting next to Lorraine, whispered, "Well, it's all over with your young friends, the Jameses, except

sending for the hurry-up wagon and giving them some new clothes."

Teddy wanted Harrison to make the opening address for the defense; but Harrison, who wished to have the close, insisted that he, as he had been there from the beginning, should do this. The young man felt the dirty floor of the courtroom roll under his feet like the ground-swell of an ocean steamer. The judge and jury were an indistinct blur, his mouth felt like an advertisement of some one's liquid glue, and his voice was gone beyond recall. He saw a white blotch over by the door, and as he struggled to his feet a suppressed sob broke the stillness of the room. The white blotch turned into the face of Mrs. Collins, and the sob from Mrs. Brown was the bugle call that brought Ted to his feet and his senses, his wits and his voice, all at once. Contrary to the expectations of the district attorney, he did not go into an extended speech, but contented himself with a general denial of the guilt of his clients, and a few sarcastic references to the charge of the prosecution that the children were homeless vagabonds. He called the attention of the

jury to the fact that the parents of the boys were in court, suffering as much, perhaps, on account of the unjust accusation of their children, their months of imprisonment on an unfounded charge, as even the unhappy father of the murdered boy. When he sat down again, Walter Davis remarked to Lorraine, "This case may be worth as much as eight lines; I'll pass the word along for the fellows to play it up a little. Your young friend isn't such a fool as he might be, judging from his being so handsome. We'll just casually remark that he's on earth;" and thus Ted received his first recognition from the Fourth Estate. The court adjourned until the next day.

XVIII

WHEN the court reconvened the next morning there was some question in regard to swearing the children. Willie Hinckley, the boy who had confessed to being a witness of the murder, and who had rescinded his confession afterward, was the first witness produced by the prosecution.

The judge called the lad to him, and got from him a fragmentary statement of his views concerning the nature of oaths. He did not permit the boy to be sworn. Ted looked at the judge attentively. He remembered that some one had told him that the judge had once been compared to Abraham Lincoln, and from that good hour that he had been trying to live up to and increase the resemblance. He was a very tall man, with a rather shambling frame, and shoulders that had a charitable, earthly stoop. The resemblance ended there; otherwise the judge was distinctly handsome, and his manner was so patient that Ted found himself

wondering whether by any chance the judge had some not over-saintly boys of his own. He decided that he was glad to have his case before a judge who wanted to be like Lincoln.

Hinckley was a lad of twelve, and having told his story and taken it back several times, he now retold it concisely and clearly. Lorraine, sitting at the reporters' table, looked over at Ted anxiously. Harrison conducted the cross-examination; it seemed to her prejudiced mind that his manner was perfunctory. As the boy was about to leave the stand, Ted stopped him a moment.

"You say that Patsy was lying down when he was shot?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, with his arm thrown over his head," answered the boy. "Roy, he stood at his feet and fired."

"How far was the muzzle of the gun from his head?"

"Not more than a foot."

"Oh, it was a gun then; can you tell us what kind of a gun it was? I mean did it have a long barrel or was it a revolver?"

"It was an old shotgun," said the boy,

pleased with the sensation he was making. "We often played with it."

"Did it belong to Roy?" asked Ted.

"Why — yes, I suppose so; he always had it."

"Do you remember seeing him load the gun? What did he load it with and how?"

"He had some shot and a paper wad; he loaded it from the muzzle."

"And tamped it down with a ramrod?"

"I don't remember."

"You would know the gun if you saw it again?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"That's all."

The witnesses brought to the stand on behalf of the prosecution were chiefly those who had testified at the coroner's inquest. Ted expected and found little new in their evidence. The trial had not lasted long before Ted was convinced of the determination of the prosecution to convict. Residents of the Riordan neighborhood were put on the stand to prove the boys incorrigibles, and they naturally made some impression on the jury. Harrison did his best

in the cross-examination, but it could not be denied that the state had a strong case. To be sure, it rested on the statement of a boy who had shown himself capable of perjury, and was backed up by circumstantial evidence only; but even so, Ted knew that it more than offset the meager amount of direct evidence he could present, were he compelled to put witnesses on the stand, a contingency which he hoped to prevent. He felt that success lay in showing that the prosecution had indicted the wrong persons.

Next to Hinckley's statement, nothing told so heavily against the accused as the statements of several members of the police department concerning the confessions alleged to have been made by Tommy and Jimmy Brown, and the attempt of the prosecution to introduce them as evidence led to a heated discussion. These depositions had been published with sensational headlines at the time of the arrest of the boys, and the prosecution made an herculean effort to have them admitted.

When Ted cross-examined the official who had sworn that he had received the confessions,

he began by asking, "How long did you have these children in jail before they 'confessed'?"

"About three days," the man replied.

"Had to sweat them several times, and several hours at a time?"

"Yes — a little."

"Isn't it a fact that you told Detective Howe that you 'spent three hours over that rickety young one, and were as limp as a rag, but you had it'?" asked Ted.

The man colored angrily, but controlled himself. "Not that I remember," he said insolently.

"Both of the boys told you Roy Collins shot Patsy?"

"Both of them."

"Isn't it a fact that the sick boy said he had a musket, a single-barreled musket?"

"I don't recall exactly."

"Here is your sworn affidavit, in which one boy makes that statement."

"Well, he might have," said the detective.

"But isn't it also a fact that Tommy Brown said Roy had a revolver, a little revolver that belonged to his mother? Allow me to refresh

your memory;" handing him the typewritten statement.

"They all agreed on a gun, an' the shootin'; the particular kind don't cut no ice."

Ted turned to the jury. "I trust the jury will remember that statement," he said. "If the court please, it seems to me this testimony is entirely incompetent. Here we are told of three kinds of guns used to assassinate this unfortunate child. There isn't a man in this courtroom who owned a gun in his boyhood who couldn't describe it accurately, to the kind of sights, the maker's name and the wood in the stock. Boys have not changed so much in the past quarter of a century as all that. If the prosecution intends to rest its case on a gun that may have been a toy cannon, a blunderbuss, or a Sharp's rifle, we want to know it."

"Never you mind about the prosecution," said the district attorney. "We'll attend to that. Your Honor, do I understand the objection to the introduction of these affidavits is overruled?"

"Objection sustained," said the judge.

Ted leaned back in his chair for the first time.

"Mr. Riordan," said the district attorney, "you will be sworn and take the stand."

The man who shambled forward, held up his hand and then dropped heavily into the chair on the witness-stand, was of about middle age. His hair was grizzled at the temples, and his face haggard and wretched. He had the instant sympathy of the spectators, and the newspaper people looked at his miserable face, listened to his low, strained voice and began to make copy. The district attorney was a past master in the art of extracting evidence, and under his skilful questioning Mr. Riordan told a story that sent many a hand upon a surreptitious search for a handkerchief. When the bundle of clothing was placed on the stand, and the torn trousers, faded shirt, and the cap laid on his knee, the man broke down and, hiding his face in his hands, the tears fell upon the pathetic little heap of garments. At that moment the prosecution had it all its own way.

A sob so hard and dry that it seemed to have wrenched itself free from the very soul of the

man broke from the father of Roy Collins. He turned this way and that, as if to escape from this torture chamber, but the room was crowded. He sat down again and bent his white face on the shoulder of the little woman beside him, and, reaching his hand across her lap, caught that of his boy. She patted the two hands gently and smiled.

It was an instant's glimpse into the terrible drama of life, but it was a reminder that all the sorrow was not confined to the prosecution's side of the case, nor all the woe endured by one parent. "'Like as a father pitieth his children,'" said Lorraine to Walter Davis.

"I suppose that's Bible," he answered. "Anything later would have been, 'Like as a mother.'"

Up to this time the prosecution had proved that many of the neighbors did not consider the accused boys beyond suspicion. Ted had tried to show that they were no more mischievous than boys usually, and was prepared to put witnesses on the stand, including teachers and Sunday-school teachers to show that there was nothing about them to justify these senti-

ments, but the value of negative testimony is slight. Hinckley's story had made a profound impression, which had not been destroyed by his subsequent confusion. Mr. Riordan's testimony was brief but conclusive. His evident suffering prompted the district attorney to ask no more questions than necessary. He told his story brokenly. Patsy had gone after the cow, as usual. He did not return, and when supper time came he went to look for the child, and found him cold and dead under the tree. There was a shot in the back of his head and some bruises on his body. He had notified the police, and the day of the inquest Willie Hinckley had come forward and told his story.

As he sat nervously stroking the clothes which he had identified as those worn by Patsy, Ted almost feared for his theory. Either the man was a consummate actor or he was innocent. Possibly remorse might account for this attitude. Any attempt to badger the witness would cost Ted's clients dear.

Ted began his cross-examination very considerately. Riordan admitted that the boy and his stepmother did not get on well, and that

he was often late to meals, which was a cause of friction. Yes, Patsy had known and played with the Brown boys and Roy. No, he had not objected. Where had they lived before moving to the flats?

"If your Honor please," said the district attorney, "this has no bearing on the case; I object to the question as irrelevant and immaterial."

The judge looked at Ted kindly. "I am sure," he said, "that in his anxiety to serve his clients the lawyer for the defense will not waste time. The witness may answer the question."

Something had come over Riordan. There was an ugly, wolfish look in his eyes. "In Illinois," he snarled.

"How did you come to leave there?"

"I don't know as I have to say," he answered.

Ted's voice was almost caressing, it was so gentle. "I have here a newspaper that I would like to have marked 'Exhibit D,'" he said; "it contains an interesting account of the white-capping of Peter Riordan by his neighbors, in return for his habitual abuse of his wife and child, Patsy. Have you anything to say, Mr. Riordan?"

"It's a damned lie," shouted the man; "I might have slapped, but I never beat her."

"But you were white-capped; you do not deny that?"

The man sat in sullen silence.

"Mrs. Riordan died shortly before you moved to the flats?"

"Yes."

"Isn't it a fact that the insurance company made some objection to paying the policy on her life?"

"Have I got to answer all these fool questions?" asked Riordan.

"You will answer the question." The judge's voice was stern.

"I don't remember," he said.

"No? Your memory is bad at times; well, if necessary I can prove by members of the company that they did object and demanded an inquest."

"Yes, and what did it prove?" snapped Riordan.

"It proved that your abuse of your family was so habitual that all your neighbors knew of it; if I remember rightly the company took

the case into court, and when the money was paid over it was not paid to you, was it?"

"It was for Patsy," answered Riordan, controlling himself with a mighty effort, while the attorney came to his rescue with an objection which was overruled.

"Say, the old judge is all right," whispered Davis to Lorraine. "Here's a chance to help Nash get re-elected, and instead of that the old fellow's just a-ladling out justice."

"Then Patsy was heir to this insurance money?" persisted Ted.

"Yes."

"Was his life insured, too?"

"Yes."

"Has that policy been paid yet?" asked Ted.

"Not yet," said Riordan.

Ted gave him a few minutes to recover himself, asked some inconsequential questions, and then said, "Mr. Riordan, hasn't it seemed strange to you that all these witnesses have described different kinds of guns?"

"Yes — no; I don't know. It's all seemed strange."

"Willie Hinckley says that Roy and the

Brown boys and Patsy often shot at the target with Roy's gun; did you ever see them?"

"No, sir."

"Did Patsy ever speak of their having a gun?"

"Not that I remember; he might."

The night was darkening down, and the courtroom was in half twilight. The man had stopped caressing the dead boy's clothing, and clutched it with fierce, bony hands.

"These boys tell of a musket and a shot-gun; do you remember that the inquest said death was caused by a thirty-two caliber ball; how do you account for that?"

"I suppose the boys made a mistake. They might."

"Don't you think that would be a singular mistake?"

"Oh, I don't know; all guns are pretty much alike." There was an attempt at jocularity that was ghastly.

"Did you ever happen to have a gun?" Ted asked quickly.

"Yes; I had a revolver once, back in Illinois," said the man.

"You left it there, I suppose, leaving in a hurry as you did?"

"Yes," sullenly.

"But you could identify it, in spite of its being like thousands of others?" said Ted.

"Yes," said Riordan, "I could, because it had my initials cut in the handle, and a groove filed in the barrel."

Ted rose and stepped close to the witness, holding something not plainly visible in the half-light. "Is that it?" he asked.

At that instant, when the hush was death-like, the bailiff turned on the lights, and the change in the witness' face was too evident and too appalling for any one to doubt its meaning.

"Take the pistol in your hand," commanded Ted sharply. "Take it in your hand, and tell this jury whether it is a thirty-two caliber, marked P. R., with a groove filed in the barrel; tell them whether it is your revolver, and how you hid it in the tree, where Patsy's dead body was found."

Riordan looked at it, dumb and fascinated; his staring eyes starting from his head, the beads

of sweat on his white forehead. The weapon fell from his shaking fingers and the light of reason faded slowly from his face. "I didn't go to do it!" he said querulously; "I didn't go to do it." His voice rose to a shriek and he fell forward.

The scene in the courtroom was indescribable. In the midst of the excitement the district attorney, who was too shrewd a man not to rise to the occasion, stepped to the bar.

"If your Honor please," he said, and the sound of his voice brought an instant hush, "from the evidence just produced I am convinced that these defendants are not guilty of the crime with which they are charged, and I believe it to be the duty of this court to dismiss them. I therefore desire to enter a plea of *nolle prosequi*, and to file an information against Peter Riordan, and upon my own motion request the court to hold him until I can file additional information against him."

Then he stepped over and congratulated Ted.

XIX

THE announcement of the engagement of Hope and Maurice Harrison was a shock to Lorraine, but as she found herself in a hopeless minority she said nothing. Bess and the boys were delighted to have a romance under the same roof, and the Heavenly Twins were mildly pleased. Louis set his under jaw and said little. Louis had never before stood so high in Lorraine's good graces.

"What's the matter with the man?" asked Miss Brent, when Lorraine took refuge with her. "Isn't he good enough?"

"Of course he isn't," answered Miss Elise. "Hardly any man is good enough for hardly any woman. Don't expect that."

"It isn't that," said Lorraine; "besides I don't feel that way about men; I've known lots of them good enough for the best women. If only Louis were a few years older! Any of the Blessed Boys are good enough, but there's something about this man that makes me dis-

trust him. He is too suave, too smiling, too apparently sincere, not to be hiding something."

"Well," said Miss Brent philosophically, "the best of men always remind me of Dooley's description of the Filipinos: — 'simple an' kindly be nature, but crool an' bloodthirsty in their instincts.' It's all a lottery, with few prizes and many blanks. When I visit my married friends I'm glad to get back to Elise and Rab; and since we have had the boys upstairs and you down, I don't know a family I'd change with."

"Don't go and borrow trouble, Lorry," said Miss Elise kindly. "He has plenty of money, hasn't he? and he can make her life easier; besides, you might just as well make up your mind to it; your friends will never in this world marry the people they obviously ought to marry. There's nothing on earth so surprising as the matrimonial misfits who think they can't be happy without each other. All the rest of us know they'll never be happy together, but other people's experience never does any good."

"I know it," admitted Lorraine; "but Hope

is so quiet, so intense. She'll never get over it if things go wrong."

"Didn't you like his novel when she brought it home and read it to you?" asked Miss Brent.

"Yes, I did," said Lorraine honestly. "It is a beautiful novel, and it keeps reminding me of some one who is as different from him as daylight from darkness. The story doesn't square with him at all. It is full of deep things; sometimes it is almost inspired, and I have listened to him when he has been talking with Ted, or with the girls, and he has never said anything worth remembering. He is shallow; his bright things are borrowed or superficially clever. He doesn't ring true," she finished desperately.

"It's too bad," admitted Miss Brent; "to tell the truth I can't imagine Hope resolving herself into a mere *hausfrau;* she has always complained that she was the three-cornered block in the round hole, but I'm afraid she will find the square hole doesn't fit much better."

"I suppose when a manuscript is accepted

there's no way of getting it back, is there?" asked Miss Elise.

"I'm afraid it's already in type," answered Lorraine. "Yet that is one of the things I don't like about him. He wants to keep it a secret. His parents live in Philadelphia, yet he has never suggested that his mother would come up to see Hope."

"Perhaps she is old or an invalid," said Miss Elise.

"In that case he might ask Hope to waive conventionality and go to see her," answered Lorraine.

"Maybe he thinks his people will oppose it," the little sister ventured.

Miss Brent laughed this to scorn. "I agree with Lorraine on that point," she said. "They ought to be proud to have Hope for a daughter-in-law, and he ought to want to spread the glad tidings to the four quarters of the earth. If I was going to marry a beautiful young man, with real genius, and wit and culture and all that Hope has, I'd send a bellman out to cry 'boy lost,' so all the other New York women could realize their loss and die of envy. But

I wouldn't worry over it any more. Just turn your hand to hemming these napkins, and try and find out how she would like to have her silver marked. We don't have to marry him. Besides, some very uncomfortable shoes turn out well and wear a long time."

XX

THE coming of the postman is always a matter of vital interest, but with geniuses it is of supreme importance. Almost any day he may bring a summons to the higher seats in the synagogue, and the really industrious apprentice in literature counts upon at least one unhappy return a week. No one but a writer can fully appreciate the sinking of heart produced by a long, thick envelope, or the ecstatic fear that accompanies a short, thin one, with the publisher's name in the corner. Other letters may have their value, but it is the thin, flat letter that causes rejoicing among the writer-folk.

Yet it was a plain, heavy envelope that made Lorraine exclaim for joy.

"It's from Mary Deland," she explained delightedly in answer to the questioning looks of the girls. "She is coming to New York —" Then consulting the letter, "She is here now! Where are my things? Lend me your unbrella,

Hope, please. She is stopping at a respectable hotel, and I don't want to be distinguished from the other lions, like Daniel, by my green cotton affair. Don't look for me till you see me!" and she was gone.

It was a dreary day, the beginning of winter, and the rain was falling disconsolately as if it didn't find cloud-life worth living. Lorraine took the L and hurried away up town. Mary's note had been very brief, and there was nothing to tell whether she had come on a flying visit or for a more protracted stay.

She was in, however, and Lorraine was shown to her room. After the first excitement of meeting was over the two women stood and looked at each other and exclaimed simultaneously, "How thin you've grown!" Then they laughed and sat down by the radiator.

"You begin," said Mary. "What are you doing to make yourself thin? I understand you are succeeding; why, then, this interesting pallor? Is it a love affair that is gnawing like a worm i' the bud?"

"Yes, it is," admitted Lorraine; "but not mine. I don't have them. My political stuff

is taking fairly well, and while men think, or say they think, women can't understand politics, they all of them prefer that topic to anything more personal when they're conversing with me. That is, if they belong to the class who take an interest in the pool. This may be a crushing admission, but it is the truth."

"But the love affair," insisted Mary. "Is it one of the Blessed Boys you have written about, or has one of the Twins suddenly fallen a victim after all these years of immunity?"

"Worse," said Lorraine. "It's my chum, Hope. It isn't the usual veally affair, either. She's over twenty, and it's a bad case and he's a bad case, and I know she is going to be unhappy, and I can't do anything about it."

Mary smiled rather sadly. "No, under the circumstances all one can do is to hope that she may prove a false prophet," she said. "If matrimony were an employment it would probably be classed among those labeled 'extra hazardous.' But don't worry. It will do no good."

"And your trouble?" asked Lorraine; "I hope it is a proxy one too."

Mary's white face grew whiter, and she rose and walked up and down the room a time or so. "No," she said, "my trouble is my own. I never told you, Lorraine, in fact I never told any one in New York, except Uncle Peter. I have lived and worked under my old name, my newspaper name; it is nobody's business. I was married ten years ago; three years after that my little girl was born, and when she was two weeks old my husband left us. Everything had been mortgaged, even the bed she was born in, and when he went away, without one word of explanation, I did the one thing I knew how to do, — went to work in a newspaper office. I was very weak still, and the city editor was kind to me; he made me copy-reader. When my husband found I had gone to work he swore that I had disgraced him, and he would never speak to me again so long as I earned my living."

"But how did he expect you to live?" asked Lorraine.

"I don't know; the mortgage was foreclosed, and the home and everything in it went. Then I took my baby and lived in lodgings. My landlady was very good to me, and let her little

girl take care of the baby." She stopped to gather self-control, and then went on: "The child did the best she could, but — my little one needed me. Oh, when people blame women for leaving their children and going out to make a living, do they never think of the heart-break of it! Do they never realize that it is a choice between going out and seeing them starve? That winter poor little May had diphtheria, and when the doctors said she would die I wrote her father; he sent me twenty-five dollars by his attorney. If I had had time I should have begun to hate him then, but I was fighting for my baby's life. Inch by inch we drew her back from the very brink of the grave; then the doctors said she must have a change, so I went to the lawyer and asked him what arrangements my husband was willing to make for her. I asked nothing, wanted nothing for myself. For a few months he sent me a little money now and then, nothing I could depend upon. My mother came and took May home with her, and I went to work to get the money to pay the debts that had accumulated during her long illness."

"And haven't you seen her since?" asked Lorraine.

"My baby? Yes, often then; but when the New York chance came I had to give her up. It meant so much, but you can never guess what it was to me to live here those two years and only see her for a few weeks. That was one reason why I went to Chicago when I had the offer; I could see her every week or so. I haven't seen her father since he left us, and I loved him, oh, I loved him so!"

She seemed to drift far away for a few minutes, and Lorraine asked, "Do you love him still, in spite of it all?"

Mary shook her head. "No; but it seems as if a part of me had died, rather than my feeling for him. I never want to see him again, yet I am here for that purpose."

"What was the trouble, dear? Why did he go?" asked Lorraine, the tears coming to her eyes.

"I think he — well, he used to take opium sometimes, and — he was not always accountable; then he speculated, and lost heavily. He was a queer combination of moods and emo-

tions, and he could be charming when he wished. I think he really felt that I had disgraced him when I went back to the desk. Don't you know there are people who think it more honorable to owe bills than to pay them by the sweat of one's brow? He was like that. Since then he has made some rather good investments, and has quite a little sum of money."

"Is he here?" asked Lorraine timidly.

"Yes; he has been here some time. That was another reason why I left a year and more ago; I learned quite accidentally that he had come here. Now he has brought suit for divorce. That's what brings me here."

"You don't mean to say you are going to fight it?" asked Lorraine in amazement.

"I must, dear," answered Mary. "I am willing enough to let him go, but if the case goes by default I could never compel him to pay a penny of alimony. Don't look so horrified, Lorraine. Do you think I am doing this for myself, or that I could ever spend a cent of his for my own needs? Food bought with his money would choke me; clothes would sting like nettles —"

She sprung to her feet and clenched her hands. "I won't cry," she half sobbed, "I will not cry."

"Do, dear," mourned Lorraine; "it will do you good."

"No," she said, "not yet. Several years ago I had a fearful illness; I had cried myself half blind and the brain fever left some kind of a weakness. Anyhow the doctors told me that tears might cost me my life at almost a minute's notice. And some day I shall break down. I must make some provision for little May against that time when she will not have me any longer. And, who knows? Perhaps she may redeem her father and lead him back to his better self. He used to be so gentle, so lovable. When I am dead I have no right to deprive him of that one chance. He can't help being a better man for being compelled to remember now and then that he is a father."

She stopped, exhausted, and threw herself upon the bed. "Don't be afraid," she said, — "don't be afraid, Lorraine. I shall not cry until May's future is secure."

But Lorraine, with her arms around her, was crying for two.

XXI

THE Saturday before Christmas was to be a day of jubilation and celebration. The geniuses had arranged quite a program, and Uncle Peter Bright and a few others of the elect had been invited to be present. Louis and Hope were to give the curtain raiser they had been working upon so long, Paul was to furnish the music, and, to Lorraine's great joy, she had been able to prevail upon Mary Deland to give a reading from the advance sheets of her new book, which was to be on the market early in the year.

There had been a flurry of snow early in the afternoon, just enough to give the proper Christmas atmosphere, and then the weather had cleared, and the night was sparkling and cold. Everybody was in the highest possible spirits. Lorraine was happy because Mary was coming; Bess, because — well, just because, sometimes there is no better reason; Hope, because Mr. Harrison, who had seemed rather

shy, had promised to drop in late in the evening; and the Heavenly Twins, because all their ducklings seemed likely to eventually turn out swans.

The big double parlors were festooned with Christmas greens, and the log fire crackled and sparkled. Every one came early, and Ted was patted on the back and congratulated till a less modest youth would have been spoiled; all the garret geniuses rejoiced in his success as wholeheartedly as if it had been their own. There was not in all New York a happier party.

The play went off admirably, and the playwright and his leading lady won applause that might well have appealed to and warmed the cockles of the heart of any professional. Then there was a little music, a duet sung by Bess and Teddy, an encore, and then Mary was introduced by Miss Brent and began her story. She had taken a few scenes and arranged them so as to give a plan of the novel, and ended with a climax so strong and dramatic that it left her hearers breathless, all of them figuratively so, two of them literally. As she proceeded with the reading in her exquisitely

trained voice, Hope and Lorraine exchanged puzzled glances. Before she had finished crimson spots were burning on Hope's cheeks, and her eyes were flashing with an angry light. Lorraine was as white as a ghost. First she had been startled, then frightened, then the light of a sudden, awful conviction broke upon her confused mind.

The close of the story, strongly dramatic as it was, held the audience. No one had heard the bell or noticed the advent of Mr. Harrison, who stood by the curtains in the back parlor, as if uncertain whether to go or remain. No one except Hope, who had risen like an avenging Nemesis and was demanding in ringing tones:

"You say this is from your story, Mrs. Deland, a book already published?"

"Yes," said Mary gently and a little surprised at the evident hostility of the speaker. "I have just finished all the revises; the book will be on the market by February."

"And you wrote it — when?" Hope's voice was vibrant with wrath and indignation.

"In the forests of Michigan years ago," Mary

answered, troubled at the meditated offense of the question; and turning to Lorraine for explanation, her glance fell upon the colorless face and rigid form of Maurice Harrison, standing as if turned to stone, and gazing at her with a malignant glare of hatred.

No one in the room ever forgot that moment. Even Hope followed the eyes of the woman she had risen to denounce, until she also had turned and was facing her lover. Her lover? This shrinking, cowering creature? Her lover, whose eyes did not dare meet hers?

"Speak!" she cried. "Who is this woman, what is she doing with your story?"

The wretched man wet his parched lips and tried to answer; then with something between a snarl and a curse he would have flung himself out of the room, but for Ted's long fingers on his collar, and the iron sinewed right arm that Prince Karl put out to bar his passage.

"Not yet, my friend," Ted said sternly. "When your affianced wife asks you a question you will do well to answer it, yes, and answer damn quick too," with sudden anger. "Answer! Do you hear?"

"His affianced wife," said Mary slowly, — "his affianced — "

"Yes," said Hope hotly, "and who and what are you?"

The older woman looked at her with infinite compassion. "God help us both," she said. 'I am his wife."

"You won't be in ten days," he said impudently; but Hope shrank away.

"It is true then?" she said. "You have asked me to marry you when — when you were already married? And I believed in you, oh, I believed in and trusted you so!" She turned from one to the other piteously, "And the story, did you lie about that too?"

All the flush had gone from her face, the light from her eyes. She put out her hands as if groping in the dark for something gone forever. "Lorry," she said faintly, "Lorry!"

But it was Louis who caught her in his strong, young arms, Louis whose face was as pale as her own.

XXII

THE holidays were long gone by before Hope emerged from the darkened room where she had been carried that eventful night. Fragile and worn with the anxiety, hard work, and disappointments of the last few years, the girl was in no condition to stand such a shaft from the blue sky of love and hope. Nature always takes her reprisals, sooner or later, and she is a merciless creditor, compounding her interest.

Worn and hollow-eyed, the girl crept downstairs one day, for the Twins had taken her into their ampler fold during the days when it seemed as if her life might flicker out. She had never mentioned Harrison's name, and he had never dared Lorraine's wrath, but once he had stopped Bess and asked after the woman he had wronged. Through Ted they knew he had left town immediately after the divorce proceedings. None of them ever saw him again.

Hope stopped with her hand on the knob.

Miss Brent and Lorraine were talking, and she heard her name.

"I can't go and leave Hope," Lorraine was saying. "I just can't. I couldn't do my work if I tried. I'd be worrying about her all the time."

"There's not a bit of use in your staying," Miss Brent answered just as decidedly. "Do be sensible; you can't do a thing for her. Poor child, no one can. You've never been in love, you're too sensible for that, and then you hated him from the very first; and for all you'll never say, 'I told you so,' every time she sees you she's going to be reminded that you did tell her so. You just go to Albany with your horrid old legislators, and leave her to me; it will be better all around."

Lorraine seemed doubtful. "Do you really think so?" she said. "Is this going to come between us, after all these years when we've gone through so much together?"

"I know," answered the old lady. "It does seem too bad that a mere man should be able to come between friends, but they do sometimes. Go away, my dear, and let her have a little time to get over it."

Hope crept back to her bedroom upstairs, wondering how the getting over it process is accomplished. When Miss Brent came in, she was lying on the couch, so white and still that, but for her wide, tearless eyes, she might have been still forever.

"How am I going to get over it?" she asked; and the older woman sat down by her and patted her hand as if she were a little child.

"I don't think you will 'get over it,' dearie," she said, "but you'll live through it. Yes, you will live through it." There was a touch of bitterness in her voice. "There are troubles one does not live through," she added.

The girl dropped back on her pillows. "'Men have died and worms have eaten them.' Oh, don't you see that that is just the worst of it? I shall live through it, and through all the long, long years heavy and savorless as unleavened bread. The tortures of the inquisition were kinder than this. One knew that death must come reasonably soon, but there is no such fortune in store for me; I have to go on and on and on — till I live through it."

The elder woman looked out at the gray sky

and flying flakes of snow. "And I love life," she said, half to herself. "Once it took so much to make me happy, and now, as I draw nearer and nearer to its close, I think I could be quite content to sit by the window and watch the snow, the rain, the sunshine, the children in the streets."

"Science is stupid, blind, futile," Hope said wearily. "Why can't I give you my life? Why must I live on when all desire of life is past? I'm so young, so terribly young; I may have to live for forty or even fifty years. Miss Brent, do you think one *must* live, whether she wants to or not, whether life is worth living or not, whether it is one long-continued misery or not?"

Miss Brent's face looked gray and drawn in the fading light, and she hesitated. "I think so, my dear," she said at length. "I don't see any way; no, I don't see any other way out of it."

After she had gone Hope found herself remembering her last words. "She said it as if she wanted to see some other way," she said to herself. "And she spoke as if she were thinking of some one else. I wonder who she meant?"

XXIII

MISS BRENT sat alone in her study. Elise had gone to visit one of their multitudinous cousins, at her sister's earnest request. Her absence was a relief and a sorrow at the same time.

"What am I going to do?" said Miss Brent to herself, after looking into the fire for an hour. "What am I going to do?" Rab came and laid a troubled nose upon her knee, and Miss Brent patted him on the head. "You're a great comfort, Rabsey, old man," she said, "but even you can't help me now. It's the Valley of the Shadow, and my faithful dog can't bear me company. You must stay and take care of Elise, poor little Elise. She'll need you worse than I; but how am I ever going to tell her? Rabsey, my dear, I think the children must help me out. Will you take a note to the top floor?"

The dog danced appreciatively until she had finished writing, and, taking the note in his intelligent little mouth, fairly flew upstairs.

"And I want a girl," continued the old lady. "I don't like to lay my woes on Lorraine, but Hope has more than enough of her own, and Bess wouldn't understand. It's hard lines, but friends are made for adversity."

Ted followed Rab's scampering feet downstairs, and the dog was despatched with a second note, and Lorraine appeared a few seconds later. Neither of them was surprised. The dog-express was an old and honored institution, but when they entered the room something told them that it was a different errand that had brought them there than any of the exigencies of a literary existence, or the whims of a patron saint of aspiring youth. Ted asked almost in the first breath, "What is the matter?" and Lorraine made the same query the moment she entered.

Miss Brent had herself well in hand. "I want you to draw my will, Theodore," she said, "and Lorraine can act as a witness."

He drew a breath of relief. "Oh, is that all? Well, that's a simple matter. Do you want me to actually do it now, or do you want to talk about it, and let me get it up in proper shape on the typewriter, with duplicate copies?"

She motioned him to a chair at the big table, with its litter of pens, papers, magazines, and books. "Now, please," she said. "I want to have it off my mind; you'll find legal cap in the right-hand drawer and blotters and everything you need." He sat down obediently and uncapped his fountain pen. Lorraine walked to the window, with a sense of bewildered anxiety, and then back to the fire, where she sat down at Miss Brent's feet.

Ted wrote the date, and then asked, "Do you want to begin in the usual way: I, Emily Brent, being sound in mind and body —"

"Not exactly," she said; "write, I, Emily Brent, being sound in mind —" She stopped, and he wrote it down and waited. The pause grew ominous. Lorraine flung her arms about Miss Brent and looked up with something like terror in her eyes. "Sound in mind," repeated the old lady firmly, "but assured that I have but a short time to live —"

Ted dropped the pen, and Lorraine's arms tightened around her.

"Yes, my dears, I mean it," said Miss Brent. "I've known it for some time, but I couldn't

make up my mind to admit it. The world is so beautiful I can't bear to leave it. I'm — I'm afraid I'm a worldly old woman. I've always enjoyed being alive, and I've never fixed my thoughts on the future life. I've been so busy, there's been so much to do, and so many to do for, that I have had no time to think about dying; and now it has come quite suddenly, and I can't seem to get used to the idea. 'Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. But if a man live many years and rejoice in them all, it is hard to remember that the dust must return to the earth as it was, and the spirit—' I can't quite seem to realize it, now that it is almost here —"

Lorraine had hidden her face in Miss Brent's lap and was crying. "But what makes you think it is here?" cried Ted impetuously. "What is the matter? You are thinner, but — who says it is hopeless?"

"It is carcinoma, my dears," she said. "That doesn't sound quite so hateful as cancer. It's the slow kind. I went to an awful place where they profess to burn them out. I was there a

year, and it was a year of hell; they claimed that I was cured, and I came home. A few months ago it recurred. I have seen some of the best surgeons there are. They give me six months at the outside, possibly not so much; I pray it may not be so long, and there will be unspeakable pain, though Dr. Powers has promised that it shall not be more than I can bear. Oh, he has been an angel to me! I — I think I couldn't stand it, but for his promise that I shall not suffer any more as I have."

Ted and Lorraine looked at each other despairingly.

"Does your sister know?" he asked.

"No; she knew before, but she doesn't know it has come back. What's the use of troubling her until I have to?"

"But she ought not to be away even for twenty-four hours," objected Lorraine. "She will begrudge every minute away from you. She just lives in you, Miss Emma. Oh, are you sure? It doesn't seem possible; are you sure?"

"Haven't you noticed how I clung to the summer?" she asked. "I went to the park every day, because I hardly expect to see it

green again, at least I hope not. Even if I last that long I shall be in too much agony to see anything. Isn't it wicked," she said sharply, "isn't it cruel and wicked to think that just because I am a human being I must be treated with less kindness than a dumb brute? If it were Rabsey we would put him out of his misery. It isn't just, Lorraine, you know it isn't just, let alone doing as we'd be done by."

"It's against the law to anticipate death in this state," said Ted, "no matter what a curse life may be."

"Yes; a foolish law, enacted by a foolish legislature," said Miss Brent curtly. "Pagan peoples are kinder and more humane. I can't understand why a Christian nation, that lives in the belief of immortality and the hope of glory, should expend every possible effort to prolong life when it is an intolerable misery. When life is a burden too great to be borne, when one has done all that can be done, why not end the agony? Why not be gathered to one's fathers in peace, instead of dragging on from day to day, to go shrieking out, half insane with the torture of a hideous disease?

The day is going to come when our present system will be looked back to as a species of civilized barbarism."

Again the quick flash of understanding passed between the young people.

"Oh, don't say that to Hope!" sobbed Lorraine. "There is a grief that eats one's heart out as — as the cancer does physically. The mind can suffer pain as excruciating as the body. I suppose if we have the right to escape from one we have the right to escape from the other, and I have been so afraid — Don't you remember, she said it would be the mental pain from which she should shrink, that night, when —"

"She is young," said Miss Brent; "she doesn't believe it now, but the sun will shine again. It is different with her; breaking the slate does not solve the problem, but — for me the sun has set. Why must I grope on in darkness?"

"Because we can't spare you yet," answered Lorraine; "and perhaps the doctor can really save you from much of the suffering. He will try."

"Remember, not one word to the other chil-

dren; not half a word to Elise," said Miss Brent.

Ted took up his pen and flung it down again. "I can't do it to-day, Miss Emma; I just can't;" and he buried his face on his arms on the table. Rab whimpered plaintively, and Lorraine caught him in her arms. Down the street a hand organ jangled painfully the notes of the once popular song, "Silver Threads Among the Gold," and Lorraine seemed to follow them and recall the forgotten words up to the line, "Life is passing fast away."

She raised her face, blotted and tear-stained. "Miss Brent," she said softly, "nobody in the world has ever done for me what you have; but for your help and encouragement and belief we might all of us have given up. Now I will try to be strong for your sake and help you bear it; but, oh, if sometimes I can't be amusing or good company any more, remember that it is because I cannot reconcile myself to letting you go, I can't seem to think of any life worth living without you."

Miss Brent stroked her hair. "It isn't as if it were for always," she said.

"No," said Lorraine quickly; "and even in the Delectable Mountains you will not forget us, toiling up the sheer steeps of the Hill Difficulty. You will not forget us, Miss Emma."

XXIV

MISS BRENT would not hear of Lorraine's giving up her legislative work, and the night before she left for Albany she had a long talk with Hope. They were alone, and had been silent for some time before Lorraine found courage to say, "Hope, I want to give you just a little, little piece of advice. I'm not heartless, and I'm not cold, and I don't mean to be unkind, but I want to say something that may seem all three."

Hope braced herself mentally, as we all do when our friends serve notice that they are about to say something for our own good.

"Do you remember the parable of the woman who had ten pieces of silver, and how, having lost one of them, she lit her candle and swept the whole house until she found it? Now suppose, after all her pains and trouble, when she found what she had thought her tenth piece of silver, it had turned out to be a cleverly executed counterfeit, worthless lead or pewter.

Do you think she would have wasted many tears over it? Would she not have been glad that she learned the truth herself, instead of having her spurious coin rejected in the market-place? Wouldn't she have looked on her nine remaining pieces of silver, tested their weight, and tried them one by one to see that each had the true ring, and would she not have rejoiced over the good coin that was left, instead of grieving over what was worthless?"

Hope's sensitive mouth quivered for an instant. "Perhaps she had planned to buy certain things with the tenth coin, things none of the other coins would purchase," she said.

"That's what I mean exactly," answered Lorraine. "Don't you see she never could have bought anything with it, because it was counterfeit? It was better for her to know it before she went out to buy."

"Nevertheless, she must go without what it would have bought," said Hope wearily.

"No, because it wouldn't have bought anything," insisted Lorraine. "She thought it would, but it wouldn't. It would have brought her nothing but humiliation and misery. It

was counterfeit. The real coin, even of the same date, is in existence, and will buy her all she desires, all she dreamed of. If she had lost the real coin, her loss would have been irretrievable —" Lorraine paused a moment; possibly she was remembering, then went on, "But the loss of a counterfeit, something that is nothing, not even the phantom of false morning, that is not a loss; it is a good riddance."

Hope leaned back in her rocking-chair and closed her eyes. "She had only so many candles," she said, "and she burned one to the candlestick looking for the silver piece —"

"And got dust in her hair sweeping under a lot of furniture that hadn't been moved since the spring cleaning," supplemented Lorraine; "but her hair needed washing anyhow, the house was spotlessly clean, she had nine good pieces of silver left, and as she swept at night she had all the day left for other things. Hope, you have ten talents. One of them is the talent for happiness. You were going to put the others away while you gloated over this one. Now you think you have lost it, but you haven't. You have lost something that gave a promise

of it. Suppose some one wishes to wrong me and make me unhappy, and I put it all out of my mind. He is disarmed. If I brood over it and make myself moody, bitter, and suspicious, he has accomplished his purpose. The poisoned arrow has gone home instead of glancing off."

"'He jests at scars that never felt a wound,'" said Hope a trifle bitterly.

"Because one refuses to wear his heart upon his sleeve is no sign he has none," answered Lorraine. "It is because I was a fool, such a motley fool once on a time, that I am trying to make you spare yourself. Let me tell you it is no small thing to sacrifice a good complexion to an idol with clay feet, and get round-shouldered burning joss-sticks before an altar that hasn't a thing in the world on it save your own imagination. Sometimes I think the French saying that when a woman loves first it is the lover that is all important, and after that she only loves love, is quite as true when it is reversed. A woman, especially a serious, intense woman, is awfully apt to love the great god of Love himself, and hang all his attributes upon a most unworthy representative the first time her

heart is ever engaged. Indeed, it is hardly true to speak of her heart; it may be nothing more than her imagination that is involved. Don't you see, dear?"

Hope rose, trembling a little, and the women caught each other's hands and stood looking into each other's eyes.

"You're a real gold piece," said Hope feelingly. "I'll go back to work to-morrow."

"You're another," responded Lorraine; "we'll both go to work, and, Hope, remember I leave Miss Brent in your care. I want you to cultivate her and amuse her, if you can; the boys are so busy, and Ted and Bess so absorbed in each other, I'm afraid she will miss me. You will find her a tower of strength."

"Is she in trouble, Lorraine?" asked Hope. "I fancied the other day, from something she said, that she was ill and worried."

Lorraine hesitated. "She'll tell you herself, dear; just be very good to her, and never let Miss Elise notice anything. Now go to bed, like a good child; we must be up early."

XXV

THE gentle art of minding one's own business, without losing the ability to know when to rejoice with those that do rejoice and mourn with those who are afflicted, is a rare gift, but the little company gathered together under the roof of the Heavenly Twins possessed it. When Hope crept back into what was left of the charmed circle there was kindness and consideration and a complete ignoring of the unpleasant episode that had wrecked her air-castle and the temporary peace of the household. If one has set his heart upon a pasteboard crown, glittering with tin-foil and brilliants, it doesn't make it any easier for his disillusionment to take place on coronation day, before the assembled multitude. To wear a gilded sorrow gracefully, before the curious eyes of the world, makes letting concealment prey like a worm in the bud seem an easy and even agreeable process.

Pride will do much, but work will do more,

and Hope returned to her labors with a kind of inarticulate fury. She was absorbed, not in her grief, but in a headlong flight from it. Lorraine scolded on her weekly visits; Louis entreated. She did not seem to understand them, and the two who helped her most were Miss Brent, fighting her own grim, always losing battle, and Bess, still so young that she believed "the setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun," and forgot that the sun has never failed to rise. She assumed charge of their tiny *ménage*, and saw that Hope had a good breakfast, and dragged her out to luncheon, and told her the perplexities that beset her, and showed her all her sketches, and saw that she wore her rubbers and took her umbrella. The girl who had been called "the Infant" became the mainstay and did the mothering herself. Hope brought much of her work home, and read to Miss Brent, whose keen criticisms were always amusing and often helpful. Finding sleep unwilling to knit up the raveled sleave of care, she pulled out her mother's plays and read them and acted scenes for the Twins and Louis. She left not one

single moment open for repining, and Bess began to feel that her efforts were rewarded.

Ted watched Bess approvingly, yet felt it a duty not to let her sacrifice herself too far, and with that end in view he took her many evenings for long, apparently cheerless walks up and down the romantic streets of that suburb of Arcadia, New York City.

While one swallow does not make a summer, one straw will show the direction of the wind, and Ted's success in the Riordan case had brought the young man some business and recognition from quarters where recognition may be figured on as cash capital. More than once he had almost needed a "This is My Busy Day" sign, and his typewriter lived in the hope of an indefinite supply of new ribbons.

One day he received a call from the Honorable Michael Cahill. Ted had the advantage of his caller in several things beside birth and education. The Honorable Michael was one of the gentlemen "written up" by Lorraine among the heroes who carry their wards. As it was an article of faith with the geniuses to read each other's published works, Ted knew that his

caller was a Tipperary man, that he had taken out his first papers the day he landed, and offered his services to the Volunteer Fire Department the next week, and that he had received a medal from the city for services rendered in connection therewith. He knew that Michael was one of the few surviving privates of the Civil War, and that the one decoration he prized more highly than his fireman's medal was the small brown Grand Army button. Michael had the reputation of being square. He was not above buying votes that he believed would stay bought, but he kept his promises to his committee-men, remembered the widows and orphans of trusted lieutenants, saw that his ward got its share of political favors, and made a specialty of keeping track of young men who might be useful. He had happened to be in court the day of Ted's victory, and learning that Ted's office was located in his ward and that Ted shared his political predilections his heart warmed to him. He foresaw possibilities in the not too distant political future, and dropping a word here and there he steered some business into Ted's office, and took him some of his own. The promptness

with which it was attended to assured him of what he already guessed, that the young man was not driven to death with the rush of business. For several reasons this suited him.

Late one wintry afternoon he dropped into the office, where Ted was typewriting a letter to Lorraine, who had not been able to come down the preceding Sunday.

"If ye're busy," said Mr. Cahill politely, "I'll wait till 'tis finished."

Ted knew it would be more dignified to pretend he was pressed for time, but he also knew that honesty was the only policy likely to win with Michael Cahill, and so he answered frankly, "Your time is worth a whole lot more than mine, Mr. Cahill. What can I do for you?"

"Have ye kept much track of the legislative proceedin's?" asked the old man cautiously.

"Fair," said Ted with equal caution; for in addition to reading the papers, Lorraine had sent him copies of bills in which he was likely to be interested, and he had written considerable legislative gossip in his letter to his home newspaper. Yet he might not even know the num-

ber of the bill in which Mr. Cahill was interested. That there was such a measure he did not doubt.

"Ye haven't read House bill one hundred and seventy-eight, have ye?" ventured Mr. Cahill.

"Lawton's gerrymander, you mean?" asked Ted quickly.

"The same. If it should pass the Sinit — "

"How did it ever get through the House?" asked Ted.

"Money," answered Cahill briefly. "We thought 'twas safe; it only passed by wan vote."

"Well, it's gone to the Sinit," he continued, "and has been referred to th' elictions committay,"—Cahill still put the accent on the first and last syllables of the word,—"and what I'm wantin' to know is whether it's like to die there, or be reported out."

The two men sat and looked at each other in silence. Ted knew the bill well. It was another of the many attempts to wrest away some part of the representation of the city of New York and give it to other sections of the state. The merits of the bill were largely according to the point of view. The chairman

of the committee to which the bill had been referred was a country member, from the district in which Ted had been born, and the lad was well acquainted with him. He knew, among other things, that he expected to move to the metropolis when the session was over. It remained to be seen whether the future or his present constituents would guide him in his course in regard to this bill.

"Ye haven't a stenographer, have ye?" asked Cahill irrelevantly.

Ted reddened. "My business hasn't warranted it," he said briefly. "If you want anything written, I can do it for you."

"It might be betther to have wan," said Cahill reflectively. "Now, if ye should be called out of the office suddenly, it looks bether and more businesslike. I know a handy boy who's taken a course at a business college. He's dead anxious to git into a place where he can study law; the wages manes little to him. He's the son of Danny Martin in the Fift Precint. 'Tis a nice lad that he is. Do ye think ye could thry him, and then if ye was called to Albany ye could leave him in the office."

Ted's brain was working fast. "Why do you want me to go? I'm an unknown man; you must have plenty of people with more experience?"

"There's reasons," said the old man. "They mean to push this bill through on the quiet. Nobody knows you yet and nobody'll ever think av putting ye and this bill together. You come from Herkimer county; mayhap ye know Hillis?"

Ted nodded assent.

"There's no cryin' need for him to report the bill out if it isn't demanded," said Cahill; "it might be better fer him if he didn't."

Ted looked embarrassed. "You don't want me to — to —"

"No," answered Cahill shortly, "neither to bribe nor blackmail, but to keep thrack of it."

Ted picked up Lorraine's last letter. "It won't be reported unless there is a demand," he said slowly.

Cahill jumped. "How d' ye know?" he asked eagerly.

"It wouldn't be exactly professional to tell," answered Ted; "but I do know as well as

one can know anything that hasn't happened. Hillis will not send the bill out unless it is demanded, and if he does it will come under the adverse reports, and have to go over. What we have to look out for is Lawton; he's trying to make a record. Fortunately he has incurred the ill will of several of his own party in the upper house in doing it, and that won't help his bill any if it does come up."

It is a peculiarity of politicians, shared by several other kinds of people, never to be able to understand how any one in another line of business may yet have some comprehension of their own. Cahill sat looking at Ted, lost in admiration and wonder. He believed him, but he could not account for the knowledge possessed by this country boy, inexperienced in politics.

"Ye think 'tis not necessary to go to Albany then?" said Mr. Cahill, rising; he wondered, too, that a young man in Ted's position should give up the chance of so pleasant and presumably profitable a trip.

"Not now," answered Ted. "We could do nothing, for Hillis is no more anxious to have

the bill come up than we are. I can get a wire, and know at least a day sooner than any one else if it is to be reported; that will give us at least three days to act. I'd like to go well enough, but I don't believe in spending a client's money for nothing, or when it isn't necessary."

"I don't believe it will ever be asked for," said Mr. Cahill.

Ted hesitated. "I do," he said, "but I may be wrong. I would advise getting a line-up against it, and tying up some of the other fellows who have important bills, so as to have some hold over them, but we ought to be ready for it when it does come. Be sure and have at least six of the most important bills from the House and from his party tied up. And, Mr. Cahill, if you think Mr. Martin's boy would be willing to come here for the pittance I can pay, and take it out in experience and reading law with me, I'd like to have him."

"Terry'll be here in th' morning," said Mr. Cahill, beaming.

XXVI

THE exigencies of politics kept Lorraine in Albany; and persuading her paper that her stuff would be greatly improved by thumb-nail sketches, she had descended upon the basement and taken Bess away with her. The fate of the gerrymander bill called for immediate action, and at the earnest solicitation of Mr. Cahill, Ted also departed for the capital city.

Before going he had a final interview with Mr. Cahill, who gave him much good advice.

"Ye may meet Baumgarten," he said. "He's the Rapublican committee-man from this precinct, an' a good fella, barrin' his politics. But this time we have th' same interests and ye can talk to Baumgarten."

"I'd prefer to have him do the talking," said Ted.

"'Tis the best way," admitted Mr. Cahill. "An' don't be sparin' with telegraph tolls. There's ither ways of economizing will be more appreciated. If ye need help bad and quick,

telephone. There's reasons why we prefer to keep our known men out av this."

"Are you perfectly sure of Baumgarten?" asked Ted.

"I am, son; in politics 'tis this way; this is the way it is. 'Tis a wheel; what goes up may stay up a long time, but 'twill come down, and it's this that makes it interestin'—the struggle between thim that'd keep it up and thim as is prayin' and, what's more, pullin' to make it come down. No man that lives in the city of New York can afford to lave go wan ripresentative. We must hold what we've got, 'tis none too much as it is, Rapublican or Democrat. No man has anny business in politics, son, who if he's a Rapublican doesn't look forward to carryin' Georgia, and th' ither way about. Have no fears of Baumgarten. Now, is there annything I can do fer ye personally, while ye are away, beside seeing that Terrence is behavin' himself, an' givin' him the father an' mither av a batin' av he doesn't?"

Ted hesitated. Then he remembered the coat of arms of the geniuses and their motto, —"One for all, all for one," — and caught a

glimpse of the sign that still swung idly and hopelessly across the hall. An epidemic of an unusual form of meningitis was prevalent, and he remembered that the board of health had decided upon a commission of physicians to learn the cause; he remembered also Dr. Silverton's prediction of almost a year ago: "some new bacillus will come to the rescue." Probably Mr. Cahill would not take kindly to a woman physician, but he was not too old to live down a prejudice.

"Yes; there is one thing," answered Ted. "There's a doctor who is a friend of mine, who has an office across the hall. If you could get her an appointment on this special inquiry the health board has decided on, it would be a real favor."

Michael Cahill's face darkened. "A woman is ut, did ye say?"

"Yes; Dr. Frances Silverton," answered Ted. "She lives in this ward."

"'Tis little difference what ward a woman lives in," said Mr. Cahill stiffly. "But I'll see what can be done."

His tone was not promising, and Terry, who

had been a silent listener, judged that the time had come for him to pay his debts.

"Is it Dr. Frank you're speaking of, begging your pardon for the question?" he asked. "She's a lady, and a doctor too. She set me dog's leg, and she saved the Murphy baby. She's the best ever."

"Castlereagh Murphy?" demanded Mr. Cahill.

"Naw, Dennis Murphy; she's wastin' no time on them that's rich. But when the vet. said I'd better kill me dog that the cart run over, she done up his leg like a Christian, and he's a good dog this day. Dennis Murphy swears by her."

Dennis Murphy was a worker in his precinct, and seventeenth cousin of the aristocratic and wealthy Castlereagh.

"The young lady'll have the place in the morning," he said to Ted; and having consented to be introduced to her, Michael Cahill went off to attend to the appointment and Ted took the next train for Albany.

Mount Parnassus was fairly deserted, but those who remained drew closer together, and

Hope tried in some measure to brighten the lives of the two women so sorely stricken. Miss Brent rarely left the house now, but one sunny afternoon the early spring tempted her, and she accepted the invitation of some friends and went for a drive, leaving Hope and Elise alone. Miss Brent's secret was no secret to either of them, but so long as it pleased her to cherish the hope that she was deceiving the patient little sister who was suffering hardly less than herself, they respected her wishes and kept up the delusion.

Left alone, the two women fell into each other's arms and cried together.

"Is there no hope at all?" asked little Miss Elise. "She won't tell me anything, but she has been to Dr. Powers, the best cancer specialist in this city. I found his prescriptions. Has she told you anything, or Lorraine? Don't answer if I am right, and I shall know by your silence."

The brave, frail little woman looked at her with a face that showed the struggle of hope and despair, but Hope's tear-stained face gave no reassurance, and she went on. "I knew it;

I've known it ever since it recurred, but if it makes her happier to think I don't, why she must think so, and we must help her to deceive herself. Do you know how long — about how long it will be now?"

"Not very long," Hope answered; "and we must not be sorry, though she does not suffer so much as I feared she would. It may be several months yet. She has such wonderful vitality, but the doctor did not expect it would have been so long as this. Oh, I ought not to have told you!" as Elise sank down, a miserable little heap in the old rocking-chair.

"How am I to go on living!" she said. "How am I to go on without her!"

"We do go on somehow," answered Hope; "and there is this one comfort for you, it can't be long. There is that blessing about not being young any more."

They sat together until they heard the sound of wheels, and Rab's joyful bark. In an instant Miss Elise jumped up, smiling and alert.

"Will she see the tears?" she asked anxiously. "Oh, my dear, you mustn't go out now; she will know you have been crying!"

Hope was busily dabbing rose water on Miss Elise's face. "You go out," she said, "and I'll run upstairs and let you in. Even if she does see that I've been crying it won't hurt, because I'm a blighted being; she will probably scold you for wasting time trying to comfort me."

Miss Elise fled up the basement steps and Hope went to the front door, her heart so heavy that it seemed to weigh down the soles of her shoes.

XXVII

"NEVER again," said Miss Brent, "never again while I have the breath of life will I waste it advising any one to fall in love, by way of arousing latent talent. Look at Hope."

"As I remember it, you didn't advise it; that was Lorraine's charming idea," answered her sister; "but then, on the other hand, look at Louis. That last play of his is worth all the rest put together. There's more feeling and power than in anything he has ever done. Making ladders of our dead selves, our broken hearts, and our blasted ambitions may be a hard way to rise in the world, but it's effective. Speaking of angels, there comes the boy now. How pale he is!"

"That's excitement as well as a broken heart," answered Miss Emma. "I hope he'll come in and tell us about it."

The turn of the key was followed by a quick tap at the door, which Miss Elise flung hospitably open. Louis was distinctly her favor-

ite. "What is it?" she said. "You look as if you had seen a ghost, and it had thrice offered you a kingly crown. You're not going to reject it, I hope."

The boy subsided into a chair, with a gesture of utter despondency.

"Have they refused it?" said Miss Elise breathlessly.

"Have they taken it?" asked Miss Brent.

"Both," he said. "When I submitted it to Mr. Raymer he said at once that he wanted to star Mrs. Campbell in it, but it should be rewritten in several scenes to suit her. He arranged for me to meet her, and she read the play and professed to be delighted, but wanted at least one more act. Well, I wrote it over twice more before I was satisfied. Then I learned that Mrs. Campbell was to be in Chicago, — you know she's been starring all winter, — so I wrote and made an appointment, and went on to see her. She was ill. I waited a week; and you know what that means to a lean and hungry pocketbook like mine. Finally she sent me word that any arrangement I made with Mr. Raymer would

be satisfactory to her, and I've just come from an interview with him."

"Well?" cried both old ladies.

"Well," with a sigh, "he wants it cut to three acts again, and the leading man given a little more work. The company is to be reorganized. He'll take the play as it is, and have Weston cut it, or he'll allow me to cut it myself; but inasmuch as my whole future is involved, I'd prefer to be my own Shylock. Weston? Oh, he's a kind of general utility man, a kind of human call-board; I guess they have them in all theaters. It is their business to telescope plays, pull them out or shut them up to the required length. If 'Richard the Third' wasn't long enough they'd write another act; and if 'Hamlet' could be improved by leaving Hamlet out, out he'd go; and if the rose garden in 'If I Were King' would appeal to the galleries by tethering a spotted calf at the right of the stairway, the spotted calf would go in."

"If that's the way they do, it's no wonder the managers have a hard time to find plays," sniffed Miss Elise.

"I remember well when Mr. Palmer retired," said her sister. "We were all so sorry; it seems to me the stage has never been the same since; he said at the time that he gave it up because he 'found it impossible to secure new and attractive material for his theater.' But don't take it too much to heart if you have to rewrite and revise; all those things are sure signs of genius. Don't you remember Sheridan had to take 'The Rivals' off and cut it square in two? Let me read you a scrap out of his preface; I think it will encourage you."

She fumbled around for her spectacles, and pulled down a richly bound, but much worn volume. "Now listen to this," she said, "and if you don't say 'here's richness,' I miss my guess.

"'In the dramatic line it may happen that both an author and a manager may wish to fill a chasm in the entertainment of the public with a hastiness not altogether culpable. The season was far advanced when I first put the play in Mr. Harris' hands. It was at that time at least double the length of any acting

comedy. I profited by his judgment and experience in the curtailing of it, till I believe his feeling for the vanity of a young author got the better of his desire for correctness and he left many excrescences remaining, because he had assisted in pruning so many more.

"'Many other errors there were, which might in part have arisen from my being by no means conversant with plays in general, either in reading or at the theater. Yet I own that, in one respect, I did not regret my ignorance, for as my first wish in attempting a play was to avoid every appearance of plagiary I thought I should stand a better chance of effecting this from being in a walk which I had not frequented, and where, consequently, the process of invention was less likely to be interrupted by starts of recollection; for on subjects on which the mind has been much informed, invention is slow of exerting itself. Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams, and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted.' Now, isn't that some comfort?"

Louis bowed. "I cannot do better than answer by the book," he said, with a half laugh. "Here's Bob Acres for you: 'Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart! I believe courage must be catching! I certainly do feel a kind of valor rising as it were, — a kind of courage'; but I'm so tired of all this uncertainty. I can't go on with anything else, and I can't cut this play. I've worked over it till — what's that he says? — 'faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams.' My mind's all hazy with it, if you can understand that."

Miss Brent looked at Elise and hesitated a minute, until she nodded acquiescence. "Show it to Hope," she said. "Just give it to her and ask her to cut mercilessly. She knows more about plays and players than anybody I know. We'll send Rab down for her."

Louis turned a shade paler, walked up and down a time or so, and then gave the manuscript to Miss Brent. "I'll leave it with you," he said. "If she will be so kind, I believe now her judgment would be better than mine."

He left the room abruptly, and a few minutes later Rab trotted downstairs with a tiny note.

"Poor boy," soliloquized Miss Elise, "he's hard hit, but he is bearing it like a man, and — maybe things will end right."

XXVIII

HOPE came upstairs and listened to Miss Brent's explanation. She took up the beautifully typewritten pages and looked at them absently.

"You have such good judgment and dramatic insight, and you have read so many plays," said Miss Brent, "and the poor lad is in such trouble about it. See if you can't make some suggestions."

"'Sure if I reprehend anything in this world it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs,'" answered Hope with an assumption of Mrs. Malaprop that sent both old ladies off into ecstasies; "but it doesn't seem fair for me to pass on other people's work when I'm such a failure myself, and as Lydia Languish says, 'have come to you with such an appetite for consolation.'"

"Poor dear," said Miss Elise. "Stay and have tea with us, and read the play aloud, if

you're not too tired. Maybe we can all help. Will Lorraine be down Saturday?"

"She doesn't say," answered Hope; "but I hardly think so; she said she had wired Teddy that House bill one hundred and seventy-eight would be reported Monday, and she evidently expects he will come up post haste."

"What's that?" asked Miss Elise.

"The bill? I haven't the slightest idea. Lorraine has a natural gift for politics; she can keep track of more bills in her head than I could on both sides of a slate, and she is actually interested in it all. I can't seem to see any difference. When we have a Republican mayor the streets are dirty and wet, and when we have a Democratic mayor they are wet and dirty. Whoever is out of power tells how well that party would do if it were in, and whoever is in tells of the vast improvements it has made. I can't see what good legislation is going to do, but to hear Ted and Lorraine when they get together, one would think election day was the earth's axis, upon which turns the fate of nations."

"Sometimes it does turn the fate of nations,"

answered Miss Brent gravely. "I remember election day in 1864."

"Why, was that election anything to be compared with that of 1860?" asked Hope.

The old lady threw up her hands in mock despair. "What a pity it is," she said dryly, "that American history is not taught in the public schools! You of the younger generation seem to have an idea that Lincoln was always revered as his memory is now. I suppose you think all he had to do in 1864 was to write his letter of acceptance and prepare his second inaugural address. As a matter of fact in August of that year he did not expect to be re-elected. Thurlow Weed told him it was impossible, and I know of nothing finer in history than his statement written at that time, pledging himself, in case of his defeat, to co-operate with the President-elect to save the Union. He sealed it up, and had it indorsed by each member of his Cabinet, and did not tell them its contents until after his election. Do you know that there were people who were proud to be called 'Copperheads' and 'Butternuts,' and wore those insignia as emblems of

their opposition to the President? Do you remember those banners, Elise, with the words, 'The War is a Failure,' and Lincoln pictured as a baboon? Why, the governor of this very state said that Lincoln couldn't save the Union if he wanted to. Good gracious, child, you may think the election of 1864 unimportant, but they didn't so regard it in the South. Jefferson Davis said the real issue was the continuance or cessation of the war, in which, for once, he entirely agreed with Lincoln. Don't forget that if Washington had his Valley Forge, Lincoln had the draft riots and the peace-at-any-price party at home in addition to the foe in the field. History is pretty much all of it a battle and a march, and most of our heroes have worn the crown of thorns for years before we were willing to give them the laurel wreath."

"Well, I agree with Hope," said Miss Elise. "I'm glad Lorraine is interested and successful, but I can't see how she and Ted can be so bound up in it, or believe anything one man can do is going to make much difference. I've lived long enough so I don't think the state

or the country is going to the dogs, no matter who is elected."

"It's you 'don't care' people who may prove the destruction of this nation," said her sister severely. "If I'd had a vote it would always have gone for the Republican party, but I'd a great deal rather people voted the Democratic ticket than that they didn't care enough to vote at all."

"I'm a mugwump," said Miss Elise. "I'd vote for the best man, and I don't think either party's got all of them."

"You'd agree with Lorraine then," said Hope. "She says she can't stand the Senate chaplain because he always prays as if he thought the Lord was a Republican. But it's their vital interest that I envy her and Ted. They're completely absorbed in their work, and they look upon politics as a high and lofty calling, instead of a 'pool.' I can't understand it."

"It is or it ought to be a high and lofty calling," said Miss Brent, "and one man can do much if he wants to; in fact all history is a record of the accomplishments of the one-man power. Look at the work done right in this

city by men with the courage of their convictions. Look at Nast with his lead pencil, at Henry Bergh, at Abraham Lincoln. One man can do almost anything if he sets his mind to it and says, 'This one thing I do.'"

"Louis is just as bad in his own line," said Miss Elise. "In politics one must be a good bit of an altruist to be a reformer; but one may have noble aspirations, even when his achievements would redound principally to his own honor. Louis believes that the stage has never begun to occupy the place in our lives which it should. He believes in holding the mirror up to Nature until she changes the pictures she does not like. Besides, it is not Nature that is so ugly, but the artificial part of our lives."

"Yes," Hope assented. "Don't you see it is this that makes me so discontented? Lorraine is satisfied, though she knows her work is absolutely ephemeral; it has its moment and that moment's influence, and then is gone. Ted has learned already something of the power of his profession; Prince Karl is going out into the world armed cap-a-pie; Paul pours his very soul into his music; Bess already dreams of Rome—"

"Of home," corrected Miss Brent in an aside to Elise.

"And Louis sees his work before him, real, living; and if it struts but a little hour upon the stage, it is nevertheless instinct with life itself. Don't you see how out of tune I am? Music? I don't pretend to understand it; I can only love it. Art? I can admire, that is all. Books? I do fairly well as a critic, but what an ungracious part, and the more so because when I attempt to write it is as if I had climbed to some lofty peak where I beheld the broad earth as a map before me, and if I could lift up my voice and chant my hymn of praise then and there it might be worth the hearing, but by the time I have descended to the valley the glow and the glory have departed. If I find my ideas at all they are drowned in the inkstand."

"The real artistic type must always dwell on the heights," said Miss Brent. "Didn't you see 'The Sunken Bell'? That is the lesson; you must be willing to leave the valley and live alone upon the height."

"Didn't I see it?" cried Hope, her eyes

shining; "do you remember the lines when Rautendelein looks at the tear upon her finger, and how the Nickelmann says:

> 'A wondrous gem!
> Within that little globe lies all the pain,
> And all the joy, the world can ever know.
> 'Tis called — a tear!'

And yet, I think one should always read 'Peer Gynt' as an offset to 'The Sunken Bell.' There the lesson is that the great joy of all his life, which he has sought all round the world, is the joy he left upon the mountainside. Oh, I mustn't talk about those things; it only makes things harder! In a few weeks I am going back home to apply for the summer school. If they refuse me, as they probably will, I shall take summer boarders. Maybe they will appreciate me."

"Never," said Miss Brent solemnly. "Don't throw yourself away so; no one on earth but Edith Wharton or Henry James could ever possibly do justice to the delicate subtlety of your waffles. They would be wasted on ordinary humanity. Come, let's have the play —"

"'The play's the thing,'" acquiesced Hope, taking the low chair under the drop light, and gathering up the loose pages; "but in the mood I'm in to-night, I think, if I were Louis, 'I had as lief the town crier had spoke my lines.'"

Nevertheless, she read it rarely well.

XXIX

MISS BRENT had heard the hours and the half hours strike as she lay in her big four-poster bed and fought her never-ceasing battle with pain. It was half past twelve, and the fire that always burned in the old-fashioned fireplace had smouldered down to a few brands gleaming dully through the white ashes. Save for this the room was in darkness. The old lady crept painfully out of bed, feeling about for her bedroom slippers, and drew her dressing-gown about her. The room was chilly and she shivered, partly with cold and partly with exhaustion, as she lit the candle and looked for her medicine.

"I wish Lorraine were here," she said impatiently, "or that I hadn't let Elise go. I can't see why Catherine has to take it into her head that Elise is a specific for neuralgia. I don't mean to break down and be sick and keep people trotting up and down waiting on me, but there's no denying that I'm awfully

bad company for myself. I suppose I ought to have a nurse," she rambled on, still searching for the medicine among the assortment of cleanly litter that covered her table. "My poor old eyes are not good for much. Why can't things stay where they are put? Oh, here it is!"

She took up the bottle. It was almost empty. "That means I've got to go out into that drafty hall for some more of it. I never had to take so much before, and it hasn't done any more good than water."

She sat down to rest for a moment as a paroxysm of pain came over her, still clutching the vial in her hands. As the agony of suffering subsided for a moment and she sat huddled over in the chair, too weak to rise, her attention seemed to fix itself upon the bottle in her hands, and slowly the light of a desperate determination dawned upon her face. "Why not?" she said grimly. "It's got to come, sooner or later; God knows it ought to have been sooner than this. The doctor promised me it wouldn't be long, and every day is a year. What use is there in suffering like this? Nobody will know — just a little more than usual —"

She stood up and drew her robe about her, and taking up the candle went to the medicine closet midway in the hall. "I don't want to get carbolic acid by mistake," she said, fumbling among the bottles and peering at the labels with her near-sighted eyes. As she stood in the long, dark hall, the dim gas-light near the front door and Egyptian darkness at the other end, her candle making grotesque shadows, she heard a strange sound, half a groan, half a long-drawn sigh, and then the bell in a near-by steeple tolled one.

"I'm getting nervous," she said. "Oh, it's quite time to be going when one gets to seeing phantoms and hearing ghostly noises — what's that?" she said sharply as it came again. She put down the vial and stood listening intently. Rab, who had followed her, whined and ran to the bedroom door at the far end of the hall and came back, whimpering and frightened. She caught up her candle and hurried down the dim passageway, but the door was fastened on the inside and her feeble strength was not sufficient to stir it. The sounds which came from within were growing

fainter. With that clearness of mental vision that often accompanies extreme physical debility a dozen ideas flashed through her brain and she remembered that the doorway leading from the hall bedroom to Elise's room, long ago metamorphosed into a closet by hooks and portières and unused for its original purpose, had never been nailed up; Elise had merely turned the key when she gave up her dressing-room to some unfortunate pensioner years ago. Hurrying back through her own room and that of her sister, she found the key still in the lock and, turning it, wrenched the door open. Hope was lying upon the narrow bed, her long black hair streaming over the pillows and her face concealed beneath the folds of a thick towel. The fumes of chloroform were overpowering. With the energy of terror Miss Brent snatched the towel from the girl's face and threw up the window. She lay white and still, no sound coming from her lips, and if her heart beat at all the poor old lady was too agitated to find the feeble pulse. Painfully she hurried back to the medicine closet and, finding a bottle of brandy, returned to her patient, but her teeth

were set. "What shall I do?" wailed Miss Brent, vainly trying to force the rigid jaws apart. She threw open the door into the hall, determined to call for aid, and the night wind blowing through the open window, her candle flickered and went out. At the same moment she heard a latch-key, the front door opened, and Louis entered.

"Thank God!" she cried. "Come here. Oh, hurry, or you will be too late!"

The young man stood bewildered, the hall lamp being too dim for him to see clearly, and then as he distinguished her in the darkness hurried forward, throwing off his hat and overcoat as he did so. As he lit the gas one glance told him the whole story.

"Leave the door open," he said; "the cold wind blowing on her may revive her." He took the pillow from under her head, and put his hand on her heart. "Have you any brandy?" he asked. "Let me have it and a spoon." He pried the close-shut teeth apart and poured a little brandy down her throat, then caught up her hands and chafed and beat them, but she showed no sign of life.

"Is she gone?" whispered Miss Brent. "Can't we send for a doctor?"

He held a hand-mirror over her face. There was a faint shadow on its bright surface. "We'll save her yet," he said. "There isn't time to go for a doctor, but I must make her breathe." Taking her arms in his firm grasp, he moved them outward and then across her body much as one would to resuscitate the drowned.

"Bring her into my room," said Miss Brent. "The scent of the chloroform is still sickening here, and maybe the warmth will help —"

A faint sigh came from the pallid lips. "Quick, the brandy." He poured the burning liquid down her throat and she stirred a little as if too weak to resist. "Now I can move her, I think," he said, and gathering her up very tenderly, he carried her into the other room and put her on Miss Brent's bed. He made up a bright fire in the grate and, wheeling Miss Brent's couch before it, made her lie down, for she was exhausted with all the conflicting emotions of the last hour. "It isn't best to bring her out of it too quickly," he said, after watching beside the patient a little longer.

"While she continues to breathe as regularly as she does there is no danger. In fact the only thing I dread is heart failure, and her pulse seems strong, though it is very slow." As she stirred restlessly he drew back into the shadow. "She may sleep; the drug relaxes all the nervous tension, and if she can, so much the better," he went on presently. "I am going to lie down on the couch in the hall where I shall hear even a whisper if you need me, but she is likely to rouse at any time and it will be better for her to find no one but you when she wakens." He turned and took both Miss Brent's hands. "If there is the slightest change, you will call me?" he entreated.

"What else would I do?" the old lady asked reassuringly. "You have saved her life. I never could have managed by myself."

The girl slept fitfully until morning, but as the gray half light crept through the closed blinds, she struggled slowly back to consciousness of the past as well as the present.

"Why did you bring me back!" she cried; "why did you!"

"We couldn't spare you yet, Hope," the old

lady said, bending over her, and putting back the loosened hair. "I, who am so near the end of my journey, beg you to stay. Something tells me that life will yet be worth living for you. I do not know why, but we are apt to think that those who have passed to life eternal are wiser than we, with a mysterious second sight. Standing as I do at the very limits of life, where its western horizon is dark with night, I seem to see the dawn come in the east. Life has not been easy for me, but it has been interesting and worth living, and after a while it will be so for you. Think, dear, of the heavy hearts in this house if you had left us so. Lorraine would always have reproached me for not taking better care of you."

"She made me promise to take care of you," sobbed Hope, "and I did mean to, I did try to be strong, and put myself into my work; but oh, Miss Emma, you don't know, you don't know the pain that seems eating my very heart out!"

Miss Brent hesitated a moment. "Yes, I think I know," she said slowly. "I don't say that the pain I bear is worse; perhaps it is not

so bad, but oh, my dear, it *is* eating into my heart! For months and months it has been creeping nearer and nearer like slow fire. I have prayed that this stout old heart of mine might fail and let me escape some portion of the long-drawn agony, but it does not lose a beat, and every day I wonder whether it is possible for me to endure another twenty-four hours. Promise me, Hope, that you will be brave, — or I must write Lorraine."

"Don't tell her," said the girl. "She could not understand, for all she talked as if it might be right that evening so long ago. I knew she didn't really mean it."

"No one shall know," answered Miss Brent; "and some time you will be glad you did not succeed, though that may not seem possible now. Oh, my dear, my dear! The mortal pain that body and soul can bear before they part company. We know it, you and I. Help me to bear these last few months, Hope, for I cannot bear them alone."

XXX

WHETHER or not Hope's suggestions met Louis' approbation, they suited Mr. Raymer, and the much revised play was put on for rehearsal. With it was to be played the curtain raiser already familiar to the geniuses. It had been the play that Saturday night, the last Saturday they had ever celebrated, and it was the first bit of his dramatic work that Louis had ever shown to Hope. It was a slight thing, depending wholly upon the art of the player for its success; but since the play had been cut to three acts again, something else was needed to round out the evening.

Now, the actress who was to take the leading part had sprained her ankle and could not appear; there were but two days to find a substitute and the understudy was terribly wooden. After fifteen minutes, Mr. Raymer called the rehearsal to an end.

"She is impossibly execrable in the part," he said. "You must see, my dear Lassalle, that

it is better to give it up than to take chances of spoiling the play itself, and losing you a success by prejudicing people beforehand."

"But the play isn't long enough. It won't fill an evening," objected Louis.

"Perhaps you know some one who can take this part on ten minutes' notice." Mr. Raymer was coldly sarcastic.

Louis' heart gave a leap and stopped. "Yes, I do," he said.

Mr. Raymer almost jumped. "Where is she playing? Can we get her?" he asked.

"She isn't an actress," Louis answered, something of the other's excitement communicating itself to him, "but she has played this and knows every syllable of it, and does it better than Miss Trevyllyn ever has. Oh, if she would do it; if she only would!"

"Go, get her," answered the manager brusquely. "We'll wait; take a cab and hurry. Who is she?"

Louis' mind was working fast. "Mr. Raymer," he said, "I'll go for her on one condition. She doesn't know that you have taken this play or ever heard of it. If I tell her

the truth it will frighten her and she will think she can't do it. If I tell her you have given me this chance to present the play to you, she won't think of herself at all and can do her best."

"And if she fails, as she probably will," Mr. Raymer said to himself, "it will let me out of a scene. Well, go on. Clyde can read his lines as if he'd never seen the part before. Go get her. What did you say she was?"

"She is a reader for one of the big publishing houses; her name is Hope Lloyd. I'll be as quick as I can;" and he was off.

Hope hardly understood the nature of her errand until they were in the cab. Then the one point clear to her mind was that a great manager might take Louis' play if he were favorably impressed with it. She knew too little of theaters and the ways of managers to see how improbable this was, and, taking her part, began going over it once more to refresh her mind. Alas, there was no need! Every incident connected with that Saturday night was indelibly fixed upon her memory. But now the words took on a new meaning, and

grew instinct with a feeling unknown before. As they entered the great, gloomy theater that soft spring day, she was living over again that night in December. She acknowledged the introductions rather dully, and with a lack of comprehension that argued ill for her. Mr. Raymer would hardly think with much favor of a mere amateur who could appear in his presence with so little embarrassment. Mr. Clyde, the leading man, shared in the feeling of wonderment, not unmixed with disdain, but obediently sat at one side of the dark stage, with his lines in his hand, and without further preliminaries the little play began.

"If you can't sing," said Mr. Raymer, "never mind about that on your second entrance."

Hope looked a little puzzled, but answered quite innocently, "Oh, enough for that; will you play the accompaniment we are used to, Louis?" And as he seated himself at the piano she left the stage, until her cue came. The scene with the actor lover was played with much restraint. Mr. Raymer, watching like a hawk, said in a quick aside to Louis, "Is she really so frozen, or does she assume it?"

"It is her conception of the part," Louis answered; "you'll see in a moment."

The star asks insolently, hardly looking at the young woman who stands before him asking for a chance to join his company, "Can you act? Have you any experience?" and the young woman proposes the little scene, portraying the return of the discarded girl, to which he gives a languid assent. In an instant the restraint vanished, the iceberg thawed. For her second entrance she came dancing on the stage singing in her blithe young voice that inimitable little *chanson* that seems fairly bubbling over with gladness:

"Dites moi, ma jeune belle,
Ou voulez-vous aller?"

There was a little rush to the supposed cradle, and then the gay preparations for the return of François after a month's absence, interspersed with apostrophes to the baby, and fragments of the sparkling song. Then came the discovery of the letter. The song stopped in the middle of a bar with a sudden minor discord. Unbelievingly she tries to decipher the

letter by the failing light; so far it is disappointment alone. She approaches the table, the little table set for two, and half mechanically goes through the form of lighting a candle, and stoops to read the sheet of paper in her hand by its rays. There can no longer be any doubt; the paper flutters to the floor, and with a strange, white face in which the horror grows she stands facing straight front. Then as if all life and strength and hope had left her she sank to the floor. It was not the usual heavy fall, but rather as if every bone in her body were broken with the blow that has come upon her. So she lay, a disconsolate little heap, while the player forgot his lines and the manager stared at Louis, who stood stricken with the knowledge that for his sake she had lived anew her own tragedy, smitten with the recollection of her words, "She is living, playing, if you like, her own life."

Mr. Raymer recovered himself first, and gave the cue to Clyde, and in a moment it was all over, and Hope was listening to words she hardly understood.

"A reader, a critic, you!" he was saying.

"Any fool can read and write and cavil. You were born to act, to live, to feel, not to mull over a typewriter, telling other people how to do things. Where have you studied acting? Why hasn't your idiot of a teacher put you on before?"

And still she stood, absolutely inarticulate.

"Lassalle, my boy," he cried, "she doesn't believe it; she looks as if she would say, 'What fire is in mine ears?' Are you quite dumb?"

"Oh, do you mean it?" she said, coming back from a personal pain almost beyond belief to a personal joy far beyond expression. "I never thought of the acting; Louis said if you liked the play — Oh, you are not — you could not say it unless you were in earnest, could you? I have longed all my life to act and never dreamed I could."

"And why?" asked Mr. Raymer, half irritably; "are real actresses so numerous that you need hesitate? With whom have you studied?"

A softer light came into her eyes. "With my mother," she said. "She taught me to love

Shakespeare and Sheridan and many of the old writers and plays that are forgotten now. She taught me to use my voice so as to make it carry, and made me learn whole acts by heart. If she had lived she meant to have given me a chance, but she died when I was sixteen and there were the other children, so I gave it up, and now — I am twenty-two. Isn't that too old to begin? Oh, don't let me hope, unless you know I can make the old dreams come true!" She put back a refractory lock of hair, with a little gesture familiar to her friends.

"Any good thing can come to Rose Farron's daughter," he said, taking her hands gently. "I beg your pardon for not knowing you at once; why didn't you brush back that stray love-lock before? I see now how very like her you are. Now try and understand this; you have much yet to learn, but I offer you a place in my company to take this part as nearly as you have done it this afternoon as possible, and you can trust me to give you all the chance you need. If you will work as I believe you will, you are certain to make a name; I believe you may be

a great actress, but it will mean harder work than you have ever done in your life."

It was Hope's Mount of Transfiguration, but Louis was even happier than she.

"I must go and wire Lorraine!" she said.

XXXI

THE Legislature completed its labors and adjourned *sine die*, and the gerrymander bill died with it, though there was a sharp fight, during which Ted took his first lesson in the great American system of circumlocution, or how not to get things done. Michael Cahill had come up to be in at the death, and he and Ted took the late, or early, train home.

"Ye have done well," said Cahill. "M'anin' no reflection on ye, I think ye have the makin' av a legislator in ye. Ye are honest, but ye are not foolish. Ye do not take it for granted that a stove will not be stolen because it is hot. When a man goes into a place where there's a large number of ither men, it makes no difference if it is a penitentiary or a Sunday-school convention, he should always raymimber there's some there that is not what they seem to be."

Lorraine and Bess followed the next day by boat, glad and sorry it was over, and enjoying the peaceful beauty of the Hudson after the

rush and confusion and wrangles of the Assembly. As Bess sat on a low camp-stool, her arm on Lorraine's knee, she looked up after a long interval of silence with an expression of hesitation on her lovely face.

"Tell me about it," responded Lorraine; and for answer she held her left hand up, with Ted's ring shining upon it. "Really?" said Lorraine, an amused look creeping into her face.

But for the absurdity of it, one would have said the girl's face was anxious. "Don't you mind, Lorraine, honestly now, don't you mind?" asked Bess.

Lorraine kissed her. "I am honestly delighted," she replied. "I'm not going to say 'this is so sudden,' because not being blind, I've seen it coming for a long time. Ted is a dear; this is one of the few cases where it will be correct to congratulate both bride and groom, for indeed, Bess, he is one in ten thousand."

"But — but," faltered Bess, "I thought you didn't approve of getting married and — and giving up one's career. Or, perhaps, you did not believe I had any career?" She looked up wistfully.

"What a little — imitation of an idiot you can be," said Lorraine cheerfully. "Of course I believe you might have had a career, and I hope you will not entirely forget how to hold a pencil, or that blue and yellow make green, or devote all your artistic ability to making paper dolls; but what you give up isn't worth half or a tenth of what you will gain. Well, go on and say it."

The girl hesitated. "Isn't it funny, Lorraine?" she said finally. "But I really thought you would despise me for capitulating so easily. You and Miss Brent always talk as if there were no use in getting married so long as one can do anything else."

"Well, is there?" said Lorraine. "Just so long as there is anything else that one would rather do, under any circumstances, she has no business to get married. That's what we mean. But don't you think marriage is something of a career? You will find that art is simple and success easy compared to being a good wife and a perfect mother. Isn't it strange, my dear, that we think only a few so talented that they may be entitled to work in clay or marble, and

treat lightly, sometimes almost profanely, the unspeakable gift of molding human clay into flesh and blood, heart and mind and soul? To my mind, being a mother calls for more genius than anything else in the world, and for more whole-hearted consecration."

"But you were so happy over Hope's finding herself," said Bess, still half unconvinced.

"Oh, yes, more than happy, but don't you see? Hope is an exemplification of the hard saying, that 'he who loseth his life shall find it.' And there is this to be said for a career, especially such a one as hers promises to be. Work is like charity, or love, if you prefer the revised version, as you doubtless do. 'Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away,' but work suffereth long and is kind; we may fling it aside and forget it, but it awaits our return, ready to supply an interest when all other interests have fled; it ministers to a mind diseased and, together with time, can pluck a rooted sorrow from the brain. Love may fail, youth will pass, but if one does the thing he loves to do he has one unfailing

source of joy. That is the reason why I am so thankful for Hope; she has found, you would not believe it if I said 'the joy of living,' but the greatest blessing of life. Even death, that robs us of all else in time, cannot rob of this, our consolation and relief. I am trying hard to realize this now, when the shadow of death is upon our home."

"You mean Miss Brent?" said Bess.

"Yes; she thinks she has kept it from us all, but we are the deceivers ourselves, and since it makes her happier to keep up the innocent pretense we must not appear to notice any change, though Hope writes me she has broken very much the last two weeks since we have seen her. Tell her the funny things, show her some of your caricatures and amuse her if you can."

"It seems heartless," said the girl.

"No, I don't think so," answered the older woman. "She is going — not to suffer any more. We ought to look on death as a resurrection, not a burial. It is 'with the morn those angel faces smile.' I know this and I say it over and over, and for her I can be sincerely thankful, but — oh Bess, when I think of poor

Miss Elise, and of going on without that courageous, helpful spirit, I am ready enough to admit that words are useless! I want you and Ted to go to them and ask their blessing; surely they have been our guardian angels ever since dear old Uncle Peter sent Miss Emma to us; and then talk over your housekeeping arrangements with Miss Elise. It will do her good to feel that we still need and depend upon her and love her very much. You have no idea what a fine, strong, brave little soul she is, and we must do all we can to help her now. I didn't mean to sadden you with this to-day, when you are so happy, and I am so happy for you — "

"Don't speak as if I were a child," said Bess, "or as if my heart were so narrow that one love must crowd out all others. I am glad you have told me. We are almost home, Lorraine! Doesn't it seem good to be home!"

XXXII

"DON'T you think Miss Emma would like to have a quiet little gathering next Saturday night, Miss Elise?" asked Hope. "Would it be too much for her, or would she be pleased?"

Miss Elise looked up quickly. They had not foregathered in one of the old-fashioned Saturday nights since Hope's trouble had come upon her. "I think Emmy would like it of all things; she has been lamenting our dulness, but couldn't we have it Sunday night instead?" replied thoughtful little Elise.

"Sunday will be the best for Prince Karl," answered Hope. "He is studying so hard I doubt if we could get him any other day, and a week from Monday is the day of days for Louis and me. Can I help Gretchen about anything?"

"You are rather busy yourself, aren't you?" said Miss Elise; "but if you can come in Sunday morning or afternoon and make the sandwiches

I shall be glad to have you, and be sure and tell the children that they are to come just as usual, and talk and be merry. They can be as attentive as they like, but they mustn't ask Emmy how she is feeling, or so much as look sympathetic. She is so morbid over being ill, and so afraid of being a damper, that nothing you can do will please her so much as for you just to be like your old selves."

"We'll try," said Hope obediently; "and if any of us seem inclined to be tearful, just give us a look and we'll remember. Oh, Miss Elise, when I think how bravely you have played your part all through, I fear I shall never be half so good an actress as you!"

The young folks gathered early that Sunday evening, conscious that there had been many changes since they separated, and that greater changes were not far from them, for the slopes of Mount Parnassus were to be depopulated. Immediately after his graduation Prince Karl was to start for South Africa; Bess and Ted were to be married and spend the summer with his people on the Herkimer county farm. Mary Deland was going abroad, her book

having been one of those rare instantaneous successes that bring wealth and fame at the same time, and she had asked Lorraine to go with her. As before, Lorraine had refused. "I can't leave them now; later I will come and bring Miss Elise with me," she had promised; and Mary had already sailed. As for Miss Brent it was evident that her feet were already set upon the shadowy pathway that leads down into the valley. For a little time there was a feeling of constraint, then Lorraine came to the rescue and, improvising a gavel, she hammered on the table.

"The joint assembly will be in order," she commanded, "that we may listen to the governor's address. Your Excellency has the floor;" and she turned and bowed to Miss Brent.

The old lady rose. She was feeble, but her face had kept its cheeriness, in spite of the lines that pain had graved upon it.

"I want your help and advice," she said, "upon a plan that has long been in my mind; it is not very well outlined, but I think Lorraine can explain it, and I want you all to feel

free to offer suggestions, because but for you — all of you — it would never have entered my mind. You tell about it, Lorraine."

It was evidently an effort for her to remain standing or to talk, and Lorraine had to struggle with a cough and a lump in her throat before she could go on. Finally she resumed, as lightly as she could: "As we all know, we are in the presence of two of the most devoted of the patrons of the arts and sciences, and more especially of those neophytes thereof who are floundering around, lost in the swamps of toil, with never a helping hand to haul them out and set them on the hard, well-trodden path that leads to a loaf of bread. They believe, these Heavenly Twins of ours, that the best way to help people is to help them to help themselves. In fact it is the only way. We none of us believe much in charity as it usually is exercised."

"Tell 'em that thing Roosevelt said about charity," interrupted Miss Brent.

"Oh, yes; I'm glad you reminded me! He says, 'The soup-kitchen style of philanthropy is worse than useless, for in philan-

thropy, as everywhere else in life, almost as much harm is done by soft-headedness as by hard-heartedness.'"

"Hear, hear!" cried Ted; and there was a ripple of applause.

"In short," continued Lorraine, "the Heavenly Twins wish to found a Genius Fund; something along the plan of scholarships, except that it is to be a loan fund to be repaid by the genius when he arrives. Any young person who can show more than ordinary ability in any of the fields of art or science, and satisfy the trustees that he is a worthy follower thereof, is to be allowed to draw on the fund to a certain amount, giving his promise to repay the money advanced to him during the lean years of study and preparation, when the fat years come."

"Is there to be no security?" asked Ted.

"None save the honor and good faith of the young people asking assistance," answered Miss Brent. "We must believe that there is no higher security than the youth and the youthful ideals of a nation, or rank ourselves among the most pessimistic of pessimists."

"The trust will not be abused if we have the right kind of a board of trustees," said Lorraine, "but that is almost as important as the fund itself. They must be people who will carry out the spirit as well as the letter of the trust, and that is one of the things about which the founders wish to consult you."

"You are going to find one trouble to begin with," said Louis. "If you get professional people on the board they are all going to say the same thing, with variations according to species. Don't act, don't sing, don't write, don't study law or medicine, don't paint, or try to let the angel out of the marble with your chisel. If you haven't two or three degrees and half the alphabet after your name, you cannot cope with the English language. If you haven't studied abroad don't attempt to sing for the American public that fancies itself musical because it whistles 'Bedelia.' You may be a second Jenny Lind; it makes no difference, the Door of Don't will be slammed in your face just the same."

"That's true," said Lorraine, "with certain shining exceptions. I have long understood

that no one should go on the stage who is not at least five feet five inches tall; this would let Hope scrape through, but it would bar out about the most successful American actress we own. Mrs. Fiske is a genius, but her best friend wouldn't claim that she is tall — only about as tall as Rachel, at least."

"And you can't get into the army unless you are half a head taller than Napoleon," said Prince Karl disgustedly. "I hope the Japs have taught the world a thing or two in that regard. I missed my physical examination for West Point by four pounds. You have only to look at the average policeman to know that in this country valor and fat are synonymous."

Miss Brent laughed. "There's a lot in that," she said. "We are a great people, we Americans, but we are young yet. We won't go into the international copyright agreement because we want to pirate foreign books, and we won't put art on the free list because it is an infant industry, though we have no welcome for our infant artists until they come sailing up to Ellis Island. Hand me that book over there, Elise."

She adjusted her glasses, found her place, and looking up said, "Just let me read you this; Mrs. Ward says, not Mrs. Humphry, but she as was a Phelps: 'Make shoes, weed cabbages, survey land, keep house, make ice cream, sell cake, climb a telephone pole, be a lightning-rod pedler or a book agent before you set your heart upon it that you shall write for a living. . . . Unless you are prepared to work like a slave at his galley, for the toss-up chance at a freedom which may be denied him when his work is done, do not write. There are some pleasant things about this way of spending a lifetime, but there are no easy ones. There are privileges in it, but there are heartache, mortification, discouragement, and eternal doubt. Had one not better have made bread or picture frames, run a motor, or invented a bicycle tire?'"

"That's all very fine," said Bess, "but if she'd tried making ice cream or selling cake she might have learned that those pleasant callings have their drawbacks also; there has always been an eternal doubt about my loaf-cake. My favorite of all her heroines confesses

to making very sour bread, but she paints real pictures, nevertheless."

"As for the joys of being a book agent, and finding signs in all the big buildings to warn you to keep out and dogs loose in all the small yards for the same benevolent purpose," said Lorraine, "while I may never amass wealth by writing books, I'll enjoy it more and probably make quite as much as I would selling them for other people. However, I can almost forgive her the rest of the paragraph, because she says 'had better' in the last sentence. That from a Bostonian does my heart good, even if I am convinced one hadn't better."

There was a general laugh, and Prince Karl rejoined: "That's the way with the average of the artistic and professional crowd. Never having done anything with their hands, they think everybody else had better stick to manual labor; that is the easy road to a competence. You must all have noticed the large number of successful blacksmiths who live in their vine-clad cottages in the most exclusive sections of town and ride in automobiles, while they consent to shoe the horses of the humbler ranks

of society. As a rule, we have all seen that lightning-rod agents electrify the world. All the people who are on top insist that the only place that isn't crowded to suffocation is to be found at the bottom. But there's one suggestion I'd like to make. The idea seems to me one of the finest imaginable, but couldn't there be some other object beside just helping a lot of young people? Couldn't there be some kind of an obligation on their part beside the mere return of the money advanced to them? It seems to me, if I were a beneficiary of such a fund, I should be more contented if I felt that I could do something to show my appreciation of those who had founded it. I can't make myself quite clear, but I think sometimes it is a good thing to feel that there are benefits that can never be repaid in money."

The old, whimsical smile lit Miss Brent's thin, drawn face. "Good boy; you've exactly struck it," she said. "I've been thinking it out while you have been talking, and I have a burden to lay upon my geniuses. Perhaps you have heard the old superstition about finding one's mission, though I believe this only applies

to women, in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, in the verse corresponding to one's birthday. Mine is this, and all my life I have been trying to live up to it: 'Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.' My geniuses must be willing to do something once every year, so long as they live, for the sake of those that suffer in silence. If the musician can do no more, he can sing or play for the children in some hospital, or for the old in some poorhouse, or for those in prison. If the artist cannot paint like Landseer, he can still devote the price of a picture to paying dog licenses for the poor children of his town or city. The lawyer can try to secure the passage and enforcement of laws for the protection of children and animals; and the doctor can set himself as flint against vivisection."

"Why wouldn't it be as well to make it a fund for the protection of animals in the first place?" asked Ted. "It would be very much simpler and more easily administered."

"Perhaps I might have done so," she answered, "if I had not had the experience of

having all you young folks with me. It has been a great lesson to me, *mes enfants*. I used to like almost any kind of animal better than the human kind, but I don't any more. Besides, as Karl has pointed out, I wanted something more than a temporary relief and a temporary benefit. This will be an ever-widening, an always-growing crusade against cruelty. Do you think war would be possible if Verastchagin's picture, 'Forgotten,' were exhibited in every village and city? Put a photograph of it over every notice of the recruiting officer, — the wounded boy with arms outstretched towards the batteries that are disappearing in the dust far down the mountainside, as his life ebbs away from hideous wounds, while a vulture hovers over him in greedy expectation. That is war. Do you recall Mark Twain's story of the vivisector's dog? That is the kind of tribute I want from my geniuses. They will not be Verastchagins or Twains, but they can add their protest; they can do their best to lighten the burden of cruelty and stupidity."

The old lady sank into her chair, exhausted with the excitement of the moment, and with

quick tact and comprehension Lorraine and Hope put the subject by, and bringing in the little tables served the dainty refreshments, in the old informal way, and after some music there was a general good-night.

XXXIII

UP to the great day of the great First Night, Louis and Hope and Miss Brent had all tried to believe that she would be able to occupy the box reserved for the occasion. When she finally gave it up, it would have been hard to say which was the most disappointed.

"Elise shall go," she said; "she will enjoy it and bring you good luck and a blessing as she has me all these years."

But Elise was unwilling to leave her sister. Finally at an appealing look from Miss Brent, Lorraine spirited Miss Elise away. "Do go," she said, "and let me stay. I wouldn't tell Hope for anything, but I should absolutely suffer through it, in a cold fear lest she should forget a syllable, or some stupid actor spoil Louis' masterpiece. They have taken me to see the dress-rehearsal, and it is great, but I should be on tenter-hooks to-night. It will be a mercy to me if you will go, and leave me with Miss Emma. And besides, they are your own

particular swans. I know that there have been ever so many times when they have been going disconsolately away to die as mere ugly ducklings under the first currant bush, when you have made them believe in their future. They will be unhappy if you don't go — why, of course, they *must* have one of you; what would any of us be without you? Please go, Miss Elise, and let me take care of Miss Emma."

Even then she might have refused, had not Miss Emma hobbled in and added her entreaties. "Do go, Elise," she said. "It won't be long, and I shall like to think that you are there. Have you made all the arrangements? We want to give the swans a supper when they come back, for of course it is going to be a triumph; Lorraine and Elise and I want to drink to you all and pledge your futures in some very harmless punch."

So it was settled, and the two friends were left alone, the one so frail and near the end, the other so strong and self-reliant with all the best of life before her. When the house was quite silent Lorraine knelt beside Miss Brent and took her hand.

"You wanted to tell me something?" she said.

"Yes, my dear," answered Miss Brent. "I have told Elise, and we had a consultation with the doctor to-day. He says it may be soon; and yet, I have lasted so much longer than he thought possible, that he will not be surprised if the release does not come for some time yet. Is it not terrible? Even if I could endure the pain myself without wincing, it is almost as bad to watch little Elise suffering with me, and knowing neither she nor any power on earth can help me. I cannot feel that I ought to put her to this torture. It is not right, Lorraine, you must feel in your heart of hearts that it is not right. If there were anything to be gained, or if I might suffer alone and add to her happiness by remaining here, perhaps I should be strong enough to bear it, but it seems to me a useless sacrifice."

Lorraine's self-control was gone, and she buried her face in the brown silk lap.

Miss Brent stroked her rumpled hair. "I wanted to tell you that I have seen my lawyer too, and explained to him about the fund, and

he understands everything and will arrange with you and Ted and Elise. I didn't feel quite strong enough to bother with all the details myself, and Elise will know just what I would wish.

"I have tried to be patient and strong, Lorraine. I have tried as I watched Louis struggle with his hopeless heartache, and Hope battling against her bitter grief and humiliation, and little Elise trying to put from her the misery and dread of the years to come. I do not think I have altogether failed, but there comes a time when it is weakness to fear convention so much that rather than defy it we suffer unnecessarily ourselves and thrust suffering on others. I wanted to say this to you, Lorraine, though no one else must ever know that I have said it. Perhaps Death himself may be merciful, at last. Kiss me, my dear, and know that if the dead return I shall be often near you. Now go and play something slow and drowsy and dreamy, and I'll try to sleep so as to be rested when they come. You are a dear girl, Lorraine, and have been a comfort to me; you will be to little Elise when she needs you, I

know, without your telling me so. Go play any little ballad thing — you know the music I like."

Lorraine played on in the half light that streamed in from the hall, and Miss Brent dropped asleep or into a half doze that left her faintly conscious of the peaceful hush and the soft, tender music stealing over her senses. Lorraine was playing "Solvejg's Song" when the wheels of the returning carriages roused Miss Brent.

"Quick," she commanded, "turn on the lights and strike up something appropriate, 'Hail to the Chief,' or something —"

Lorraine sprang up, turned on all the lights and was playing "Lo, the Conquering Hero Comes" with grace notes and accidentals not to be found in any arrangement of it, when they all came in together, pell-mell, all talking and laughing at once, save Hope and Louis, and trying to explain how Racine and Rachel, Molière and Mrs. Siddons, had all been put to rout.

Lorraine drove them all into the dining-room, where Louis was seated at Miss Elise's right

and Hope by Miss Emma, and there were toasts and more toasts, and Miss Emma seemed to forget that there was such a thing as pain, while she pledged first one and then another.

"I am sure we ought to feel honored," she said, "for I know the lions were wanted and expected elsewhere. But you were wise to come straight home. When 'The School for Scandal' was put on, Sheridan celebrated so vigorously that he woke up in jail the next day. I'm glad to have you emulate his success without drowning your pleasure in the flowing bowl. You can drink endless quantities of this punch without fear of a headache. All success to you, my boy, but if discouragement comes, remember that Shakespeare never, no never wrote one of the six best-selling books!"

They drank the toast standing, and then Miss Elise led Louis to the head of the table, so that the Heavenly Twins stood together, Louis on one side and Hope on the other, both of them happy, confused and blushing at the honors heaped upon them. But in spite of vociferous demands they could not speak. Louis stammered words of incoherent gratitude and affec-

tion to the Heavenly Twins and all the dwellers on Mount Parnassus for the faith and inspiration that had never failed him on the weary upward climb, and then he turned to Hope. "Of the play," he said brokenly, "if I cannot claim that it is so good as to need no epilogue, then I must confess like a dull actor now, I have forgotten my part. Whatever success has come to me I owe to you, who have believed in me and most of all to her," — he bowed to Hope, — "whose very name is a bugle call to the drooping spirit and whose genius has wrested victory from defeat!"

"Make him your best bow, Hope, and promise to spring eternal whenever the cue comes," said Lorraine laughing. "'Hope is a lover's staff,'" she whispered in an aside to Miss Emma. "I wish we were sure that he might 'walk hence with that.' Come, Hope, say something for us to remember when the great world claims you, and we have become only part of the crowd that stand in line before the box office."

But Hope turned first to the Heavenly Twins and then to Louis with something upon her face that none of them had ever seen before, and the

voice that had thrilled the great audience an hour or two ago was low and tremulous with feeling.

"There are no words to thank you," she said. "For you, Louis, the world will bring its tribute. But I, what can I say? I that was dead and am alive again, I who was lost and am found?"

There was a moment's hush, then Miss Brent said quite gayly, "If I remember it, the rest of that verse is, 'And they began to be merry!' If these geniuses of ours refuse to let us burn incense, here's to the bride! Teddy, we congratulate you on acquiring a genius all for your own. Bess, we hope you will be happy, though married. Here's to the geniuses, may you live long and prosper; God bless you all, God bless you every one."

* * * * *

When the morning dawned the greatest blessing to those who sink to slumber in pain, and waken in suffering, had brought release to Miss Brent.

A Novel that Mirrors Washington Society

THE IMPERSONATOR

By MARY IMLAY TAYLOR

Illustrated by Ch. Grunwald. 12mo. Cloth, $1.50

An exceedingly fascinating story. — *Atlanta Constitution.*

Not only a most absorbing story, but the ranking novel of those whose scenes are laid in Washington. — Lilian Whiting in *Times-Democrat.*

The humor and satire with which social life in the capital is described gives the book a deserved popularity even if the charming love story and surprising dénouement did not add an exceptional degree of interest. — *Washington Star.*

A pretty girl art student in Paris is induced by a homely girl art student to go to Washington as the substitute for the homely one, who has been invited to visit a rich aunt whom she has never seen. From first to last the interest is skilfully maintained. — *St. Louis Post Dispatch.*

Clever both in conception and execution. . . . A tale of Washington society reflecting with accuracy certain aspects of the semi-fast life of the nation's capital. . . . The characters are all strongly individualized and the action is as swift as it is natural. The impersonator herself is admirably drawn. — *Boston Transcript.*

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

254 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON

A Novel with a Problem to Solve

THE MASTER KNOT OF HUMAN FATE

By ELLIS MEREDITH

Author of "Under the Harrow," etc. 16mo. Cloth, $1.25

A remarkable book; original in action, conception, development, treatment, and the mystery of the "unguessed riddle." — *Buffalo Commercial.*

An admirably conceived and well written story, in which the interest is maintained up to the tantalizing end. — *Philadelphia North American.*

A remarkably powerful and remarkably fascinating story. . . . The reader will enjoy "The Master Knot" for its rare imaginative power and its novel situation. — *Boston Journal.*

Since Olive Schreiner wrote that oddly fascinating "Story of an African Farm," with its unanswerable queries, there has been nothing to compare with it until this riddle of Ellis Meredith's. — *Los Angeles Herald.*

An intensely human book. The play of human passion, the movement of human experience, the force of human love, all combine to give us a story of which the length is all too short. — *Baltimore Sun.*

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

254 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON

A Delightful New Blue Grass Country Character

AUNT JANE OF KENTUCKY

By ELIZA CALVERT HALL

Illustrated by Beulah Strong. 12mo. Cloth, $1.50

This book, a picture of rural Kentucky life, will evoke the deepest sympathy from every human heart with which its characters come in contact. Aunt Jane is a philosopher in homespun and in her "ricollections" we see the beauty, the romance, and the pathos that lie in humble lives.

The humor of the book is softened and refined by being linked with pathos and romance, and the character drawing is done with a firm hand. Nancy Huston Banks, the well known author, says it is "a faithful portrayal of provincial life in Kentucky, but something more than that too; for *the universal note which marks the value of all creative writing sounds on every page.*"

Every one is sure to love Aunt Jane and her neighbors, her quilts and her flowers, her stories and her quaint, tender philosophy.

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS

254 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON

"Something absolutely new." — Chicago Record-Herald

THE WIRE TAPPERS

By ARTHUR STRINGER

Illustrated by Arthur William Brown. 12mo. Decorated Cloth. $1.50

The oddest love story in current fiction. — *Kansas City Star.*

Mr. Stringer is at his best in this novel. — *Hartford Courant.*

Really a fine specimen of the fiction of excitement done by a skilful hand. — *New York Globe.*

Worked out with an amazing cleverness. — *New York Herald.*

Far removed from sensational fiction by its character drawing, which is excellent. A sincerely worthy work, by far the best thing Mr. Stringer has yet produced. — *Boston Transcript.*

This story of a young man and young woman thrown into a criminal environment, through force of circumstances, throbs with virility. An underworld story without sordidness. — *New York Dramatic Mirror.*

LITTLE, BROWN, & CO., PUBLISHERS
254 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON

University of California
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
305 De Neve Drive - Parking Lot 17 • Box 951388
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90095-1388
Return this material to the library from which it was borrowed.

8258766

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 128 082 5

University of Cali
Southern Regio
Library Facili